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ART

With grace abounding

David Rosand

DAVID THOMPSON

Raphael: The life and the legacy
256pp, with colour and black-and-white pictures. BBC Publications. £19.95.
0363 201 495

ROGER JONES and NICHOLAS PENNY

Raphael
256pp, with colour and black-and-white illustrations. Yale University Press. £15.95.
0300 03061 4

PAUL JOANNIDES

The Drawings of Raphael
With a complete catalogue
271pp, with 690 illustrations, including 21 colour plates. Oxford: Phaidon. £65.
0146 22825

In Giorgio Vasari's biography, Raphael appears as a creature uniquely endowed by heaven and nature, a figure graced and a bringer of grace, whose own courteous manner was accepted to civilize artists and to enlighten the world. Until Raphael, Vasari explains, in his best evangelical mode,

most artists had in their temperament a certain madness and foolishness that made of them strange and eccentric; and because of that the darkness and shadows of vice were more often manifest in them than the shining light of those virtues that make men immortal. For good reason, then, was Raphael, on the contrary, made to display clearly all the rarest virtues of the spirit accompanied by such grace, industry, beauty, modesty and finest manners that would purify every vice, however ugly, and correct every fault, no matter how grave. One can affirm with confidence that those who possess gifts as rare as those to be seen in Raphael of Urbino are not mere mortals but, if we dare say so, mortal Gods.

But even as we have returned to acknowledge this master of the classical style, the very idea of the style itself, with its assumption of formal perfection, enjoys a rather equivocal position in the modern canon. Heinrich Wölfflin, who did so much to mould our sense of the High Renaissance, distinguished the aristocratic quality of this style in contrast to the presumed bourgeois naturalism of the Quattrocento. The particular demands of a true classicism may well be unrecognizable with a democratic aesthetic.

"I hope you're going to help me to like him," according to David Thompson this was one common reaction to the announced plans for a BBC television programme on Raphael. The book giving printed form to that project is one of several published this year on the occasion of the quincentenary of Raphael's birth. Written (and produced) for a "general" audience, part of it does not take Raphael for granted. Thompson recognized the difficulty of presenting this avatar of classicism to a contemporary public, and he succinctly summarizes the dilemma - that "we have not yet found the place for him in our own culture". A critic for whom problems of confrontation and accommodation are clearly urgent, Thompson directly faces difficulties with their attendant ethical as well as aesthetic implications - that most professional art historians are unwilling even to acknowledge.

We are led with dreadful inevitability towards words and attributes which have lost their power to convince us. Balance, harmony, grace, facility, naturalness, beauty are no longer persuasive virtues. They are all bound up with what has been understood by "classical" standards and ideals, but our own century has never come to terms with them.

Synthesizing the basic literature, Thompson offers a fine narrative account of the artist and his times; his text is intelligent, generally well-founded, critically perceptive, and nicely proportioned in its coverage. The general reader of this *Raphael* will learn much about the artist and the Renaissance world that nurtured him; he will also find an excellent introduction to the challenge and rewards of Raphael's art.

Raphael by Roger Jones and Nicholas Penny is also a book intended for the general reader - and, like Thompson's BBC volume, it too offers a generous complement of illustrations in colour (in both cases of varying quality). Jones and Penny also recognize, in their preface, that Raphael, compared with Leonardo and Michelangelo, "was not a rebel, a victim or a failure - which perhaps is

quality that seems to erase from the minds of men every base thought.

Nineteenth-century lovers of art enthusiastically embraced and embellished the image of "il buon Raffaello", whose Mdonius enchant us, wrote the Abbate Luigi Lanzi (paraphrasing Anton Raphael Mengs), "because the painter in their portraits, and in their expressive smiles, has personified modesty, maternal love, purity of mind, and, in a word, grace itself". This Raphael, "born to paint Madonnas and Angels" (Eugene Muntz), has had to carry an embarrassing burden into our own century. Indeed, only by rescuing the artist from his more piously aesthetic admirers, by reclaiming other, more monumental aspects of his art, have modern criticism and scholarship been able to restore to the image of Raphael some of its original impressiveness.

figure in the foreground with his elbow on a block, who was not included in the cartoon. More than anyone else in the fresco he powerfully does what one expects philosophers to do - sit and think - but his identity has not been established. (His features have, implausibly been seen as those of Michelangelo.)

The reader is offered no further guidance, no bibliography, no indication that this figure has often (and quite plausibly) been identified as the melancholy Heraclitus, no sense that the recognition of the features as those of Michelangelo raises some interesting questions regarding the modality of Raphael's imagination and the possibilities of meaning - especially with respect to the professional implications of a composition that contains other portraits of artists,

If Jones and Penny limit the possibilities of meaning and, therefore, of our experience of certain of Raphael's works, they reward us in another way. They encourage us to rediscover the delight of his art, its sensuousness and sensuality. Their choice of opening illustration - a detail of the problematic "Fornarina" - a revealed breast and the painter's signature on the armband of his presumed beloved - immediately sets the tone. And their appreciation of Raphael as a painter of flesh, of the special animation of his portraits, of the naturalism of his art recalls the enthusiasm of earlier admirers, like Vasari. That aspect of Raphael again appears to us as essential to his achievement - even a prerequisite for the apparently abstract perfection of his classicism.

But we are left, nevertheless, without an adequate critical account of that classicism. The style that Raphael brought to its purest expression - a style that evokes the expressive values of Phidian Athens - combined in almost implausible balance the ideal of form purified to geometric essence with the conviction of nature. Beneath the abstract perfection of Raphael's creatures we sense the affective life that animates them, and which draws us into the drama of their being: the apparently conventional forms of their masks move us to deep pity; their composure enforces a meditative response, and their measured choreography controls the rhythm of that response.

In some sense the structures and mechanisms of this dramatic classicism are epitomized in the "Massacre of the Innocents" that Raphael designed to be engraved by Marcantonio Raimondi. The signature on the engraving, which prominently declares Raphael as the "inventor", signals - quite possibly for the first time in this way - the special status of the artist as imagining mind. Distinguishing between invention and execution, the inscription on the "Massacre of the Innocents" realises, in practice, a distinction already implicit in Alberti's earlier efforts to define the separate parts of the art of painting. What had become by the end of the Quattrocento a keen awareness of the artist as master of *istoria*, of narrative invention, was carried still further by Raphael. His powers as an inventor seemed almost to require many more executant outlets; his ideas would eventually be realized by assistants, their brushes serving as mechanical extensions of the master's conceiving mind - as Marcantonio's burin, trained surely by the example of Raphael's pen, allowed even tentative or abandoned pictorial notions to find public and permanent expression. If these two aspects of Raphael's operation - the efficient use of studio hands and the mass diffusion of his inventions through prints - have contributed to the stigma of the academic that attaches to his reputation, they nonetheless must be considered as part of the complex phenomenon of his classicism, of pictorial ideas potentially abstracted from its own realization.

The idea of the "Massacre of the Innocents" may have come from Raphael's drawings for another project, the "Judgment of Solomon" on the vault of the Stanza della Segnatura. And its further development, like its final realization, seems to essentially graphic: initially conceived and evolved in drawing, the composition and its constituent units, graphic as well as figural, maintain that scale. The function of the printed image is precisely to convey the *idea* of its invention, which we are invited to read, through the sustaining formal regularity of Marcantonio's burin work - which itself participates in the classicism of Raphael's style. Indeed, drawing offers some key to an understanding of that style; the regularity that informs contour and surface, propelled along paths unobstructed by natural accident, seems to initiate in the very gestures of Raphael the draughtsman.

"The history of Raphael's drawings is that of his art as a whole," writes Paul Joannides in his introduction to *The Drawings of Raphael*. "Most surviving drawings are functional, preparations commonly regarded as an allegory of the immortality of the soul, and although there is nothing in Raphael's treatment of the narrative to encourage an eschatological exegesis it would not have been surprising if such an interpretation had occurred to the more high-minded visitors to the villa."

Clearly, we are not invited to join those visitors, and just as clearly, the implication is left that Raphael's intention can have had little to do with such exegesis or self-indulgence. But even as we acknowledge the overt, conjugal significance of the theme, must we assume that the painter totally abstained from the courtly games of interpretation? On a basic level, such interpretive responsibility only served to enrich the experience of an image.



"Massacre of the Innocents", engraved by Marcantonio Raimondi after Raphael, reproduced from Raphael by Roger Jones and Nicholas Penny which is reviewed on this page.

one of the reasons for his diminished popularity in modern times". They also acknowledge that Raphael's great influence on European art since the Renaissance has not helped his reputation: "a century after his death his works began to be adopted as models for academic instruction and this has determined the rather frigid respect which has often replaced the delight and amazement found in Vasari."

Jones and Penny offer a precisely focused and detailed survey of Raphael's "achievements and ambitions as a painter, architect, archaeologist and entrepreneur". Their book presents a most satisfying introduction to the really quite extraordinary range of Raphael's activity, especially in and for Rome. Their method is historical, emphasizing "the purposes for which his art was designed". Such a functional approach necessarily implicates the special context in which each major painting or building project is located, the circumstances of patronage that generated it, the historical explanations for its being.

The very readability of Jones and Penny's text, however, serves to underscore one particular problem of their study. For all their attention to the richness of Raphael's world, they avoid full engagement with the meanings of his imagery. In part this may be due to the nature of their enterprise: a general book is no place for extended exegesis or scholarly debate. On the other hand, they do not hesitate at times to add provocative asides, often parenthetically, which demand but do not receive further discussion. Here, for example, are their comments on the brooding figure in the foreground of the "School of Athens":

the programme was flexible enough to admit a last-minute newcomer to the scene - the seated

فهرست مطالب

for painting, their style an indication of the intended pictorial effects. The study of Raphael's drawings has in fact served as a foundation for significant advances in modern scholarship on his art in general — in the monumental work of Oskar Fischel (recently continued by Konrad Oberhuber), in the catalogues of the great collections of Raphael drawings such as those in the Ashmolean Museum (by K. T. Parker) and the British Museum (by Philip Pouncey and John Gere), and in the studies of individual projects (by John Shearman, Oberhuber, and others).

Joannides has sought to assemble the fruits of this collective labour and to present in a single volume the complete corpus of drawings by Raphael. Both the serious student and the general reader will be grateful for this publication, for now we have a convenient catalogue of all the drawings — although debates over attribution, especially involving Raphael's chief assistants, Giovanni Francesco Penni and Giulio Romano, will continue in and around the fringes of this body of work. Appealing to an audience on two levels, Joannides has given his book an intelligent and useful structure. It consists of an introductory text ("A general account of Raphael's drawings in the context of his artistic production"), a section of forty-eight plates ("focusing on particularly beautiful or significant drawings"), and a catalogue of 460 entries, fully illustrated by small reproductions (adequate to their documentary purpose). There is also a necessary concordance: intended to serve as an index of collections, it also provides a brief bibliography for each drawing catalogued, as well as a summary of other opinions on attribution. Specialists may, however, be frustrated by the brevity of the entries, the lack of full documentation and bibliography, and the failure to transcribe inscriptions.

Guided by an essentially functional approach, Joannides presents the

drawings within the larger context of the projects they prepared. He discusses choice of medium and shifts of style in relation to purpose, the rationale for the drawing becoming the explanation of its particular form. This historical approach, inextricably linked to the sequence of Raphael's career, permits the ordering of the drawings and leads naturally into such problems as that of studio participation — and these concerns strongly shape both introduction and catalogue.

"Raphael lived at a turning-point in the history of Italian draughtsmanship", Joannides writes without exaggeration, "at the moment of a fundamental shift in vision and technique". It is on this essentially critical level, however, that his text falters, for he never considers the larger significance of that shift, thereby depriving us of a fuller measure of Raphael's achievement. Despite many fine insights, Joannides does not generally realize the potential or the implications of his own perceptions; nor does he capitalize on the possibilities of his book's organization. The short texts accompanying the large illustrations of the plates (and one can only regret that not more of these are in colour) might have afforded the opportunity to explore many more aspects of drawing.

Joannides's descriptions too often seem content with superficial categorization or laconic *aperçus*. The most extended discussions relate to stylistic or formal sources or, predictably, to function, the role of a drawing in the preparation of a painting. A particularly uncomfortable term that he frequently falls back on is "pentimento study", as though by so naming a sheet of rapid sketches one has somehow accounted for its unique dynamics. True, Leonardo was the first artist of Vasari's modern era deliberately to test the implications, theoretical as well as practical, of the rapid sketch, to explore the range of its expressive possibilities. But to assume that Raphael's own exploration of this

active mode of drawing must indicate the direct influence of the older master seems unnecessarily restrictive. The development of such an exploratory activity, with its internal dialectic of response and alternative, appears rather an organic one, latent in the very act of drawing, the draughtsman expanding and realizing the potential of that act.

In a particularly striking sheet of studies of the Virgin and Child in the British Museum (Ft. 1-36; Joannides cat. 180), for example, the circular motion of Raphael's discovering pen is at once revealing of the classical aspiration of his style and of the natural dynamics of his imaging process. Especially in a sheet such as this we feel closer to a comprehension of Raphael's classicism. Joannides recognizes this:

Here the pen strokes, moving in ovoid patterns, generate rather than depict the forms; they do not give the impression of being studied from models but of growing out of the intersection of pen and paper. Even Leonardo's most elaborate pentimento studies retain the restricting angularity of life. Here, although the play of rhythms is much more abstract, given the vitality and emotional power of the theme of the relation of mother and child, there is no sense that intimacy is sacrificed to formal values — indeed the abstraction renders the relation more elemental.

This is fine criticism. There are many such passages in Joannides's book; each one stands out in its brevity, promising us still more intimate knowledge of Raphael and his difficult classicism — but never quite fulfilling that promise.

Art history as a discipline can take us just so far toward understanding. Something more is required. Only a genuinely critical effort, grounded in but transcending history, can answer to our needs, can lead us towards that fuller understanding of the art of Raphael — and not only of Raphael.



"Studies for the Virgin and Child", in pen and brown ink with faint traces of red chalk, executed by Raphael in about 1505.

In seemly deterioration

Lucy Ellmann

RICHARD INGRAMS and JOHN PIPER

Piper's Places: John Piper in England and Wales.

184pp, with colour and black-and-white pictures. Chatto and Windus/Hogarth Press. £12.50. 0 7011 2550 0

John Piper is eighty this year. He has endured the tempests of twentieth-century art by ignoring most of them, although he did experiment with collage and abstraction in the 1930s, and belonged to Ben Nicholson's "Seven and Five Society" for a year. Through an early love of churches and ruins, work with Sir John Betjeman on the Shell Guides to Britain, and an understanding of the work of Cotman, Turner and Dufty, Piper developed his own style of neo-Romantic art. A Romantic, explains Richard Ingrams, is "someone who discerns the extraordinary in the ordinary and who finds excitement in his own backyard". This is not easily done in English, or even Welsh, backyards, so it is to Piper's credit that he manages to "make something of his own subjects". Piper's Places is neither biography nor art criticism; it offers a selection of the artist's best work, some reproduced here for the first time, along with comments on the events and locations which fostered it. These topographical paintings feature churches, castles, mountains, seascapes, prehistoric sites, and the gardens of Stowe and Stourhead. Piper takes advantage of church sculpture to make his only drawings of the human form, with hostile rural pagan results. But his favourite subjects are buildings in the process of slow and seemly deterioration. He writes, enviously of his easy access to architectural ruins: "In the early nineteenth century, most country houses were then at an extreme of picturesque beauty. Reading through the country guide books, there was an exquisite state of decay."

In general, Piper's pictures involve a cleverly incomplete outline in black, occasionally accompanied by

additional details in white, and positioned over a blurred, coloured background. This separation of form from colour flattens the painting, although luminous buildings at times protrude in contrast to dark skies and foliage. Starkly spotlighted, they look a little like secret military camps, stumbled upon at night. The few collages included in the book are lively seascapes, in which Piper's method is somewhat reversed. The patches of colour (here pieces of paper) represent precisely the absence of boats and beachhuts, modified but not greatly interfered with by the windows, waves, and shadows roughly painted in black. His reluctance to encumber forms with a sense of scale and weight often diminishes the scenes he finds impressive. Thus a wan Windsor

Castle, with its ruled lines and exact joining to the perfectly flat ground, looks like a model assembled from a rather challenging cut-out kit. Piper's oil paintings attempt to adapt a watercolourist's medium to the purposes of a watercolourist. As usual, a great mistake. In one such oil, the grass looks fake, the church flat, and other grim shapes (trees?) are ranged around the picture in far too petrifed a manner.

Through Piper's varied landscapes meanders Ingrams's wishy-washy text. He never applies himself to the pictures. This must be what the dust-jacket speaks of as his "very appropriate informality" — he is the sort of host who forgets to serve the supper. In their review of Piper's

encounters with bombed Coventry and wet Snowdonia, Ingrams is best when he trails behind the artist, tidying up certain points. After Piper is quoted at length on the time of day at which it is possible to find central Reading beautiful, Ingrams mentions that the entire town centre has since been rebuilt. He has saved us a trip, which is kind. Unwisely though, he sometimes launches into greater detail:

At Portland Bill itself there is now a large car park but the rows of brightly painted holiday huts are still there and the triangular "sea-mark" next to the lighthouse and the little stone cottage with the stepped roof standing near the derelict wharf are now used by the fishermen to lower their boats into the sea.

Such prose can hardly compete with Piper's Shell Guide entries. Determinedly unambitious, Ingrams's contribution to the book ends with a strangely embarrassing account of an uneventful tour of the Fens he made with the Pipers in 1980. Ingrams apparently spent the time taking down Piper's every utterance while the artist remained more interested in looking at churches.

The book ends with a whimper: Walking back to the hotel we note the slightly melancholy atmosphere that public schools have — perhaps because they provoke unhappy memories of one's own school days. Turning the page, we find that Mr Ingrams has vanished, leaving only his lists and index.

Welcoming the West

John Milner

BEVERLY WHITNEY KEAN

All The Empty Palaces: The Merchant Patrons of Modern Art in Pre-Revolutionary Russia.

342pp, Barrie and Jenkins. £15.50. 0 09 147980 0

In the first decade of this century Moscow became the most advanced centre for the collection of Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, Fauve and Cubist art. It is an extraordinary fact, and the theme of Beverly Whitney Kean's well-researched book, that these brilliant collections were assembled chiefly by merchants. They were not remote and aloof figures, but almost without exception became closely involved with young Russian artists, opening their palaces for literary, musical and artistic gatherings. The achievement of Sergei Shchukin, for example, the most celebrated of these collectors, was not simply to amass in Moscow a collection of modern French art of unparalleled quality and range, but also to have exerted an essential influence on the art of his day by displaying his collection, with his patron general

to public and painters alike, by introducing, years before Roger Fry's Post-Impressionist exhibitions in London, the work of Matisse, Picasso and many others. In Moscow, the intensive study, display and collection of Russian icons flourished alongside a growing enthusiasm for the new art of Paris, Berlin and Munich; and ironically, when Matisse visited Shchukin, he was welcomed by Russian artists committed to a distinctly Russian and Eastern art.

In *All The Empty Palaces*, Beverly Kean concentrates upon merchant patrons and collectors, and in doing so, she moves close to the crux of the matter. For Ryabushinsky, Tishcheva, Morozov and Shchukin were not peripheral figures. Their collections constantly evolved, reflecting their numerous contacts with Russian as well as Western artists and dealers, their palaces becoming living museums where bureaucratic considerations were out of place and where personal involvement was the hallmark of informal gatherings attracting men as diverse as Denis, Chailov, Yuliev, Lunacharsky, Matisse, Larionov, Diaghilev and Malevich. Kean is assisted by the collectors as individuals as skilful by the work they assembled. If this technique permits consideration of individual

paintings it nevertheless provides a lucid insight into the merchant patrons' lives and personalities, and they emerge from her survey idiosyncratic creatures beset as much by tragedy as by ambition and motivated by a relentless love of art.

Pride of place is given, quite properly, to Ivan Morozov and Sergei Shchukin, who provided the final and lavish flowering of a financial and cultural phenomenon that could not survive the Revolutions of 1917. At times they acquired works scarcely dry from the studios of Matisse and Picasso, visiting Durand-Ruel, Vollard or Kahnweiler within days of each other. Kean dwells at length — it is the most moving of her personality studies — on the suffering and patient Shchukin, whose Trubetskoy Palace had salons filled with paintings by Gauguin, Matisse and Picasso. Devastating family bereavements led him to seek solace in the remote monastery of St. Catherine at Wadi el-Dzer in the Sinai, where he met a painter monk on whose wall hung a reproduction after Matisse. Shchukin's taste for Matisse became insatiable and he did not omit to send pigments to the painter-monk in the Sinai.

Among other collectors investigated by Kean are the withdrawn and studious Pavel Tretyakov, whose life is

described as "a parable of diligence and integrity" — he systematically assembled a representative collection of Russian art, which, in its time, competed with Alexander III's museum in St. Petersburg, less a collector of artworks than of creative individuals. Ryabushinsky, playboy and bon viveur, who financed the Children's Fleets exhibition, in the spring of 1908, 197 recent French paintings were exhibited alongside the Russian collection, so that Larionov and Gorky, charova, for example, hung in the company of Pissarro, Cézanne, Degas, Bonnard, Gauguin, Van Gogh and Matisse.

The Revolutions of 1917 destroyed the social structure of which Morozov and Shchukin were a part. Both were given the curious honour of working as curators of the new collections, and both in due course emigrated to Paris, remaining close to the artists they so admired. *All The Empty Palaces* concludes with a brief outline of the subsequent history of the collections, which now form the core of the modern collection at the Hermitage and the Pushkin Museum, and where the achievements of these extraordinary merchants are finally preserved and recognized.

Safe with the bourgeoisie

Michael Neve

RICHARD COBB

Still Life: Sketches from a Turnbridge Wells childhood

161pp, Chatto and Windus/Hogarth Press. £8.95. 0 7011 2695 7

RAINE SPENCER

The Spencers on Spas

Photographs by John Spencer

160pp, Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £9.95. 0 297 78310 6

When not engaged with Robespierre and St Just, and keeping up his tirade against these founding fathers of all that is monstrous in modern European history, Richard Cobb has applied his historical genius to describing nowhere: people, places and things that are outside politics, outside fame, almost outside time. He has chronicled a Europe that aspires to the condition of Brussels.

The energy that has made his historical writing so individual springs from a division, between languages, between countries, between a rhetoric of denunciation of past, celebrated monstrosities and a protective but equally fierce defence of the marginal, the unfused, the failed. The vividness

of Cobb's historical style is genuinely startling. It is the opposite of historical reflection, and more like painting. He has now returned to one of the original sites of his life — a childhood in Turnbridge Wells — to extend the range of his observation, and to perform his customary and still remarkable feat of making purest autobiography part of a general, social history.

Still Life, in ways that the author would surely take pleasure in, must be the most bourgeois work of memory and recollection written in English since the war. Cobb has broken one of the strangest silences in English social commentary: on the missing history of the English bourgeoisie, of us, of the middle class refuses to write about itself in England, refuses to do the decent Hegelian thing and bring its story into the logic (and possibly extinguishing glare) of history. Somewhere, we all have a trunk with our name on it, or had a Universal Aunt, and we all know what Philip Larkin's devastating two words "that vase" tell us about home. But we would rather not say so. The prep-school is to stay behind its dark rhododendrons; "Turnbridge Wells" is really the name for a certain kind of unconscious mental life, and unlike Karl Marx, none of us would ever admit that sitting in the sun at Eastbourne might be pleasant. The English bourgeoisie has never properly taken power, and one of the reasons is

that its history is a conspiracy of silence, a stifled cough at tea-time on a grey afternoon.

Richard Cobb must know this, but his purpose is not the simple one of writing a history of the economic origins of Turnbridge Wells. Instead, he mythologizes the place where he spent large parts of his early days; he paints it, he saves it. Cobb adds Turnbridge Wells, for most people only a cliché, to his list of European enclaves that speak of safety, of tiny rituals, and of continuity. Turnbridge Wells is the opposite of Revolution. And it is not peopled by Mary Wollstonecrafts — one of the famous victims of Cobb's berserk invective — or even Mary Shelleys, although she did spend most of her last years in Bournemouth.

Still Life has a classic opening: the approach to the town by train, and the accuracy is graphic. Past the suburb of High Brooms, where none of the good trains stop, and into the long tunnel leading to the Central Station, to the "stygian gloom of both platforms". And whole lives, both past and present, are given their sentence: "The 5.50 was the liquid train — 6 to 7 doubles between Cannon Street and the Wells. There follows a controlled and affectionate account of the inter-war middle-classes that has few rivals. Cobb names the hills of Turnbridge Wells — Ephraim, Sion, Pleasant among them. He walks the Pantiles, inevitably, but knows about books, about the contents

of his mother's drawers, about airguns and possible violence. He describes how hours of gazing into windows in Turnbridge Wells revealed nothing of interest. He certainly shows us versions of himself. As far as I was concerned, Turnbridge Wells and sex did not reside together." And appears in a photograph taken when he was seventeen, both apprehensive and handsome.

He tells us that there were some German bombs dropped on Turnbridge Wells but "they do not appear to have been meant for Turnbridge Wells, but were probably left-over from London raids." And about mythological people, about the Black Widow, and the man who taught him geology. We hear the voices: "why did you lead with hearts?" we see, without quite seeing, what the couple are doing on the common; we know that there are probably no Jews around, and that it would be nice if there were, to replace the Catholics: "Why had my parents inflicted on me the unspeakable initials of R.C.C?"

A stillish life, then, in watercolours, but with its fiercer moments ("I was in love, with a boy at school called Hook.") There is a lovely conclusion, taking tea at Mr Evans's, and looking at pictures, especially those of David Cox. And an epilogue, about his mother's death. It is a period piece, but without the dated feeling that the phrase implies. For the modern denizen of the place, Cobb's Turnbridge Wells is certainly a limited one, but then it is meant to be. He would, for example, have nothing to say about the modern Showfields estate, out beyond Turnbridge Wells West station (on which he is very good; more importantly, he is out of date on the matter of vice. Turnbridge Wells was of course the *fons et origo* of spring water and vice, in the Restoration, as the poems of Rochester testify. Cobb speaks of the

Sussex public house, near the Pantiles, which in his day was known as the "Sussex Shades". It was once a little infamous, peopled by characters "looking as if they belonged to some secret brotherhood", but then, our guide assures us, it was cleaned up, and "the Pantiles has lost the slight frisson of vice". I am pleased to say this is no longer the case: one of the reasons why the Sussex is one of England's finest taverns is exactly because it has the atmosphere that Cobb believes disappeared decades ago. The Pantiles remains peopled by ghosts from its bawdy past, before imperialism brought home all the majors and their wives, or the children farmed out to relatives.

One ghost, above all, unites *Still Life* and the elegant book on English spas by Raine and John Spencer: that of King Charles the Martyr. The be-headed king seems to be in all spa towns, to testify to the essential conservatism of such places, and in Turnbridge Wells the church named after him is especially prominent. The Spencers have made a quieter, more conventional picture of Cheltenham, Harrogate, Malvern, Leamington and of course Bath. The photographs please but carry no history, only the sense of safe harbours for a vale-tudinarian bourgeoisie. Spa towns shouldn't just make us think of Bath: we can think of Charles Darwin trying to feel better in Victorian Malvern, or of Buxton, one of the most delightful places in Europe. Hydropathy was one way the Victorian middle class tried to avoid medical heroes, and this book conveys the deep, hotel-like comfort that such strategies necessitated. These two books seem to share a covert royalism, but they then part company, for reasons to do with medicine and with tone. Photographs cannot compete with the minimalist force of Richard Cobb, a disfigured of Turnbridge Wells who is one of the few genuine practitioners of the art of memory.

Whiffs of theatricals

Hilary Spurling

MICHAEL REDGRAVE

In My Mind's Eye: An Autobiography

256pp, Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £9.95. 0 297 78278 9

When Michael Redgrave was a child of four, he once used his middle finger to his index finger to point at something, a trick of his father's which so frightened his mother that she nearly screamed. Michael's father was a legendary figure, the "cock of the North" and star of the Britannia Theatre, Hoxton, tall, lean and handsome, adored by both sexes, equally at home as Hamlet and as the gentle bush-ranger hero of any number of melodramas written by himself. He had married as his second (possibly bigamous) wife an actress, Daisy Scudamore, shortly before her son Michael was born in 1908; and he took off for Australia shortly afterwards, leaving behind him a trail of fatherless children, and a reputation still glowing thirty years later when Michael came across a former dresser from the Brit: "You're Roy Redgrave's son?" he asked with gratifying excitement and admiration. Michael himself made his stage debut in Australia (where Roy had been rashly pursued by Daisy) at the age of two, tongue-tied and fearful, in a prophetic monologue recited by his father:

The drama called "Life" you have got to appear in
And altho' but a "call boy" to start with
You'll need to be "lead" by the end of the play
To remember that some day you're sure to be "lead".

Boy died eventually of drink, long after his wife had cut her losses and moved with the baby to England. The shadow of my father haunted her with his was an old woman, writes Roy Redgrave, whose "own childhood and youth were shaped by his mother's proprietary terror that he might grow up to resemble his father."

with a younger, outstandingly dim and inhibited fellow lodger called Peg — for a spin in the car by this uncle. They found Daisy waiting, not in the usual theatrical digs, but on the front steps of a house of her own with a maid Peggy, his half-sister, how and when she came on the scene? wonders Redgrave, offering no further clue as to whether, in all their years at the same baby-minders, Peggy had known any more than he did about her father, or even realized that Michael's mother was hers too.

Michael was promptly dispatched to find the stranger downstairs, give him a kiss and call him "Daddy". A precocious and independent small boy, much petted, accustomed to turn heads and shift for himself, he was required with no notice and no word said to adjust from the friendly, unstable, loose-fitting, familiar world of digs and lodgings to the rigidly controlled pressures of conventional middle-class life expressed from now on in the freezing, unspoken constraint of family meals. Michael's stepfather was a military man, generous but unimaginative, philistine, conservative and adamantly opposed, for the boy's own good, to the faintest whiff of theatricals. "I feared him", writes Redgrave, adding only that of all the rooms in the house he hated and dreaded the dining-room.

He was packed off to prep and public school (Clifton College, where his Lady Macbeth and his ravishing Captain Absolute caused such a stir that the bigger boys fought for his favours), followed by Cambridge (where he founded a literary magazine with Anthony Blunt and acted on sets designed by Guy Burgess), and a stint as a schoolmaster at Cranleigh (where the tough, sporting regime was briefly interrupted by a whirl of spectacular theatrical treats for the boys). All in all, it must have been a considerable relief to all parties when, in spite of the combined misgivings of his mother and stepfather, Michael finally slipped over the border between the amateur and the professional stage at Liverpool Rep in 1934.

A deadpan reaction, it is by Redgrave's own account, his habitual method of defusing any potentially explosive or startling piece of information, which presumably explains why this extraordinary story is told with so little expression and still less explanation. He must have been round about seven years old when transported to a new world by his stepfather some time during the First

World War, though the date of his mother's second marriage is given elsewhere as 1922 (the year Roy Redgrave died in a Sydney hospital). If no questions were asked at the time, no answers are to be given now. "As for Peggy, my half-sister, how and when she came on the scene?" wonders Redgrave, offering no further clue as to whether, in all their years at the same baby-minders, Peggy had known any more than he did about her father, or even realized that Michael's mother was hers too.

This must be one of the vaguest autobiographies ever penned, even by the unexacting standards of theatrical memoirs. Redgrave is if anything more forthcoming about his childhood than about what happened afterwards, whether in professional or private life. His much vaunted liaison with Edith Evans, his spats with Coward and Garbo, his highly competitive relations with Olivier and Gielgud are barely touched on. Family, friends, fellow actors are treated with impartial gallantry and reserve, while most of the productions he acted in might have been directed by robots for all we learn to the contrary. Perhaps the nearest thing to an authentic *frisson* in the whole book is a feeling account of Donald Wolfit who, having agreed to appear in Tyrone Guthrie's *King Lear*, was growing rightly uneasy: "Because, you see, he said, 'I have thirteen effects in my *Lear*, and I don't mean to lose one of them.'"

But, however short on theatrical anecdote, *In My Mind's Eye* does give off a powerful sense of the theatre's importance — clearly crucial all his life to Redgrave — as a means of exploring reality while simultaneously holding it at bay. Hence no doubt the fact that, for all his celebrated romantic triumphs, his most memorable effects have always come from playing misfits. Rejects, outsiders — Sir Andrew Aguecheek, Ratcliff's "Cockney" Harris, Chekhov's "Tusenbach" and Uncle Vanya. Redgrave complains at one point, glancing briefly at the difficulties of his marriage, about the conventions that prevents people like himself from openly discussing the secret fears and miseries expressed for his generation in plays like *Mourning Becomes Electra* and *The Family Reunion*. His own philosophy comes in, practice closer to another of Roy Redgrave's charming, melancholy, turn-of-the-century ballads, "encapsulating the gaiety, courage and casual desperation of a life spent whistling in the dark:

More light, more wine; let the music chime
And the feet again begin.
And along with kiss, keep back the time
When day and ghosts come in.

Growing up and away

Margaret Forster

PHYLLIS WILLMOTT

A Green Girl

144pp, Peter Owen. £8.95. 0 7206 0610 1

On September 14, 1933, Phyllis Willmott left her Victorian terraced house in Lewisham with its outside lavatory and gas lighting to catch a tram for Greenwich, where she entered for the first time Roan School for Girls, a grammar school. A simple journey, but for her, as for so many working-class children, as hazardous as going up the Amazon.

Phyllis was a "green girl" because that was the colour of her uniform. Purchasing it had been the first hazard because Mum tenaciously resisted buying it at the official (expensive) shop when its goods would be "no different from what you get at Marks". But school itself held no perils — she loved it, settled in well, made friends easily. The dangers all lay at home.

Sharing the grammar-school ethos made her an alien in her own family. She corrected the family's speech because she herself had been corrected. The tension grew over the years and her work suffered, until she only just passed Matric. Mum and Dad waited expectantly to see what all this meant. She herself wondered as she worked in the Times Book Club in Wigmore Street, half asleep with boredom. Grammar school had raised her aspirations and ambitions but left them unfulfilled. In June 1939, she gave notice, aged seventeen, and moved to a bank. Then war began and this slice of autobiography ends with Phyllis joining a Bomber Command unit as a weather girl.

A Green Girl is not as successful as *Growing up in a London Village*, the first book in which Mrs Willmott described her childhood. But then adolescence is much harder to deal with, particularly when one is anxious, as this author is, to keep everything as simple and light-hearted as possible. Adolescence is neither simple nor light-hearted and trying to make it so leads to fatal understatement. Take,

for example, the crisis in sleeping arrangements. "Like many working-class children, both then and now, Phyllis had to sleep in her parents' bedroom because of overcrowding. Once she went to Roan it became obvious that she was too old to be doing so. Trying to sleep became purgatory — "rattling noises, then a regular creak of the springs of the double bed merged with the sound of Dad's breathing which got heavier and fiercer. . .". With her newly acquired knowledge of what such sounds meant she found all this hard to ignore, but the real shock was not hearing Dad's exertions, but hearing Mum say "That little bitch is awake again!" This is the kind of comment which does not fit into this sort of gentle, untroubled narrative. It needs explanation and the distress it caused the author needs expressing; if not, the fabric of her "growing up" story, which is what the book is about, has big holes in it. To what extent was the author alienated from her family? How painful was this alienation? And was it inevitable?

A Green Girl answers none of these questions — questions that arise quite naturally in the reading of it. They are important too, as Mrs Willmott almost certainly knows; part of the attraction of her books is that, in them she is covering largely uncharted territory. Both in fiction and non-fiction the experiences of working-class boys who make the transition, through education, from one class to another is well documented; not so with working-class girls. The burden for them was greater. Boys were always admired for wanting to get on. Girls were not. They pulled, as Mrs Willmott pulled, not just against different standards but against a fundamental objection to their leaving the home at all. The grammar schools gave them their chance and to understand why so few of them were able to take it and use it to its full potential (which Phyllis certainly did not) we need to know much more. Mrs Willmott could have told us. But she has written, presumably, what she wished to write and that is an amusing, sensible little history of life as a grammar-school girl in the 1930s. It is a compliment to her skill that one is greedy for more.

Living with impossibility

Stephen Medcalf

CHARLES WILLIAMS

The *Arthurian Poems*: Taliesin through Logres and The Region of the Summer Stars
163pp. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer. £5.95.
0 85991 089 X

GLEN CAVALIERO

Charles Williams: Poet of Theology
210pp. Macmillan. £20.
0 333 27183 1

THOMAS T. HOWARD

The *Novels of Charles Williams*
220pp. Oxford University Press. £16.50.
0 19 503247 0

In the queer, bright, sensuous and passionate world where Charles Williams sets the Arthurian legends of the *Novels of Charles Williams* and the *Region of the Summer Stars*—whether landscapes are naturalistic:

The waste of snow covers the waste of thorn;
on the waste of hvels snow falls from a dreary sky;
mallet and scythe are silent; the people die.

romantic:

flashing flaunts of snow across azure skies,
golden fleeces, and gardens of deep roses.

or visionary:

near a clear city on a sea-side
in a light that shone from behind the sun

—the dominant image is of light playing on landscape, or on a human body, or on something that is both at once. It is an apt symbol for the continued preoccupation of the poems with the relation of the human spirit and soul to the world of matter and form.

The same preoccupation appears in their style, with the muscular rocking rhythms and dizzy echoing alliteration and internal rhymes which are so well adapted to express physical action and interaction.

The problem of the relation of body and consciousness is one before which our whole world of thought seems to have come to a halt. People of ordinary common sense hold opposing views more, whole contradictory sentences exist — which are simply nonsense in terms of each other's presuppositions.

Williams delighted in this situation. In every kind of ambiguity, and certainly in this one, he had the power to discern the positive relation which he called *coincidence*. He follows this clue to the mystery of self and body alike in the imagery of *Taliesin*:

Take: I have seen the branches of
Brocelande.
Though Camelot is built, though the king sits
on the throne,
yet the wood in the wild west of the shapen
and manner of
probes everywhere through the front of
head and hand;
everywhere the light through the great
leaves is blown
on your substantial flesh, and everywhere
your glory flames.

and in the more gnomic style of the *Region of the Summer Stars*: "Flesh tells what spirit tells / But spirit knows it tells".

The coincidence of self and body is recognized in love, which is itself a coincidence of persons. In so far as the idea of coincidence works, it does so because it connects the relation of self and body with other relations: personal, social, economic, theological, linguistic and poetic. Kay, the king's steward, approves the king's setting up a shrine because coins make economic exchange easier. Taliesin, the king's poet, responds that "if you made verse you would doubt symbols", the archbishop answers that money too can serve the ultimate moral truth of exchange: "that the everlasting house the soul discovers" is always another's, and Sir Bois, the type of wedded love, brings the problem to his wife Elaine, whose hands deal out the bread to his household.

When *Taliesin* was first reviewed in the TLS forty-five years ago, its

reviewer, picking up a line in which Taliesin is described making verse, "his voice / rove and drove words to the truth of ambiguous verse", remarked that the "effort with which [Williams] seeks to drive meaning into his verse so often overreaches itself". This is judicious but not quite fair: for the character of Williams's mind was such that the "effort" and the "seeking" might be as well applied to controlling as to bringing in fissiparities of meaning. Fairer is his own description of Taliesin's agony at imagining his mind at its normal working, if it were deprived of the capacity to make poetry in which the working ought to issue, "pledged / beyond himself to an edged anguish dividing / word from thing and uniting thing to word — each guiding and each fighting the other".

Dense or fissiparous with meaning as Williams's verse is, it is also always vibrantly alive. Moreover, Williams is insistent that only in relation to something organic and visionary can his webs of meaning make sense. The line about Taliesin's driving words is preparatory to, and set in contrast with, his falling in love; Elaine is the sole figure of "organic salvation" to Boris, just because he loves her.

It is this commitment at once mystical, visionary and romantic that makes the Arthurian cycle, with its stories of the holy Grail and of the religion of love, the most suitable vehicle for what Williams wanted to say. Indeed, he would have made the converse statement, that the elaborate system of meanings was naturally implicit in the cycle, especially Malory's version of it. He said that he liked the title *Taliesin through Logres* because it "sounds romantic and vague and is almost classically exact".

Taliesin the king's poet becomes the type of poetic imagination, the poet, and Logres, the land of Arthur's quest and of the Grail, is the visionary and Platonic side of Britain, and also the personal life through his criticism to his theology of the Atonement, and indeed to the quality of his belief in God. His belief that the whole universe is to be known as good, with its last and therefore a fact in joy, is a fact in the novel *Descent into Hell* — was bought at a fair price. Each of his novels, as Dr Cavaliero well points out, is about paying the price: "In each one the supernatural threatens to overwhelm the natural order, and equilibrium is only restored by those who can accept both aspects of reality".

the road that runs from tales
sings to the trams of towns
in a forest of nightingales.

Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote to Robert Bridges that, to a Protestant, mystery connotes vagueness but to a Catholic an incomprehensible but exact definition. Williams would wish to make the two coincide: he remarked that glory, which seems to many a "mazy bright blur", is in fact a maze with an exact pattern, which we have to examine. It is this examination which his verse, with its juxtapositions of splendid and analytic words, of the romantic and sensuous with the mathematical, tries to express.

The anthropologists and critics are uneasy with Williams's verse, or pass it over altogether. But he is very much a poet's poet, in the sense that a number of poets — Eliot and Auden, MacDiarmid and Anne Ridler, Geoffrey Hill and John Heath-Stubbs — have praised and imitated him. It has been suggested that those who knew him were dazzled by his personal magic and saintliness; but this is certainly an insufficient explanation for an effect which spreads far beyond his personal friends. Yet it is certainly true that coming to like Williams peculiarly resembles catching the accent of a personal voice, strange but fine.

As well as elements of the opaque and grotesque, and a near-physical sensuality, one finds in Williams's poems a frequent welling up of sadomasochistic imagery; and it is worth noting that a passage about the transcendence of emotional pain in *Shadows of Ecstasy* is one of the most striking indications of Williams's subtlety and wisdom. But, like the tactile erotic sense of flesh, the sense of pain is in the Arthurian poems normally transcended (there are exceptions, like *Taliesin's Song of the Unicorn*, which Williams himself thought bad), and it seems right that

"heavenly" understanding of the human condition should include these things, as it includes also the spiritual dryness and conversion of Palomides and the dreadful paralleling of the ruin of the Roman Empire with physical and mental disintegration which again in "The Prayers of the Pope" conveys Williams's understanding of fissiparousness.

"Heavenly" is a proper description of Williams's understanding: lines like that of vocation, "They only can do it with my lord who can do it without him", communicate in context that sense of release which is the mark of the heights of ethical wisdom — of some of Dr Johnson, or of the Sermon on the Mount: "manned by the web, in the web made free / there was no capable song for the joy in me". It may in fact be the extreme importance of what Williams had to say that paradoxically accounts for the insufficient honour he has as yet received. His poetry, like that which in most ways seems closest to it, Blake's *Prophetic Books* and Yeats's "Byzantium" poems, demands a considerable degree of commitment, indeed of belief. Nevertheless, after forty-five years, his poetry survives, and is indeed more natural in many respects to a generation among whose finest poets are Geoffrey Hill and C. H. Sisson. I think it will increasingly give that sense of our capacity to know a kind of exaltation, and a kind of division, which it uniquely has the power to give.

The same qualities run through all Williams's work. But that sense of the reality of truth which in the poems he leaves implicit in the fact of their being poetry (and therefore of their saying, "Let us suppose . . .", as he said Dante's *Inferno* does), becomes overt and central in the novels, histories, criticism and theology. Glen Cavaliero in his excellent study *Charles Williams* traces Williams's understanding that our lives are always bound up with an impossibility, from his personal life through his criticism to his theology of the Atonement, and indeed to the quality of his belief in God. His belief that the whole universe is to be known as good, with its last and therefore a fact in joy, is a fact in the novel *Descent into Hell* — was bought at a fair price. Each of his novels, as Dr Cavaliero well points out, is about paying the price: "In each one the supernatural threatens to overwhelm the natural order, and equilibrium is only restored by those who can accept both aspects of reality".

Disillusionment is where Williams starts from — hence the not always fortunate similarity of his irony to Lytton Strachey's, but the irony is one that has been extended, in a sense defeated, because it embraces not only contradictions within the natural but also a lively awareness of the transcendent, and of the supernatural as an experience. For one of Williams's most attractive features is his ability to accept all human experiences as true at the level of seeming, and still to care so immensely for the distinction between fact and illusion that the words are almost synonymous for him with good and evil. That is why his most brilliant description of the corruption of a soul is that of a historian — Wentworth in *Descent into Hell* — and also what gives him his peculiar genius as a historian: "himself Cavaliero rates high among his studies of living with impossibility his biographies, and this is his masterpiece his history of the church, *The Descent of the Dove*."

This may well be just — it is hard to think of any other book, even the Bible, which is so successful in presenting history as the work of God, while retaining a balanced and objective Gibbonian irony — but it perhaps is a little dictated by the stress on Williams's penchant for diagrammatic language. The Latin title of the book, *Descent into Hell*, is important to Williams as pattern is, it is possible to exaggerate its importance. I think Cavaliero does not attribute to it for example, the "visionary" nature of the character portrayal in the novels. But it is only the lesser characters who are cursorily portrayed. Williams was not interested in portraying character from without, and where for the sake of the story he does so, the dialogue follows the half-tragic, half-ironic mode of his

own speech which — fascinating, by all accounts, from his own mouth — is a very hit and miss affair in print. But he gives you the fullness of inner experience.

T. S. Eliot rightly singled out as the great achievement of the novels what was their great importance for himself in the genesis of *Four Quartets*: that Williams with the "extended spiritual sense" which he had, "like a man who can notice shades of colour, or hear tones, beyond the ordinary range", describes "with extraordinary precision, the kind of unexplainable experience which many of us have had once or twice in our lives, and been unable to put into words". To some extent Cavaliero concurs with this. He shrewdly compares a passage in *Descent into Hell*, describing the spiritual life of an old woman dying, to the later Henry James; and praises the power by which in that novel and in *All Hallows' Eve* we are persuaded of the butterfly in the *Place of the Lion*, or of the policeman in *The Greater Trumps*, which I think are the sorts of rare experience Eliot had in mind; in related but more common experiences, as the works of art seen as the intersection of many dimensions in the novel *Many Dimensions*, or the peculiar loneliness of suburban streets

Cornish's swansong

Terence Tiller

PAULA NEUSS (Editor)

The *Creation of the World: A Critical Edition and Translation*
249pp. New York: Garland. \$50.
0 8240 9447 6

So little survives in Middle Cornish, that a new and thorough edition of its last major flowering is very welcome. The real triumph of Cornish literature is the trilogy of *Ordinalia*. To the first of these plays (*Origo Mundi*) *The Creation* is not closely related. Paula Neuss considers the *Ordinalia* to be roughly coeval with the original fifteenth-century MS; some would put them half a century earlier. Similarly, while the MS of *The Creation* (the fifth and last Cornish Miracle Play) was faircopied in 1611 by one William Jordan, the text itself may belong anywhere in the preceding fifty years — or more. That would still make it the last of its kind, properly so called, to be composed in Britain; but it is curious in other ways too.

The oldest Cornish plays were performed in open-air amphitheatres called "plen-an-gware" ("play-calls"), and according to highly stylized production techniques. These are described — in the decline of the tradition, and already of the Cornish language — by Richard Carew (*Survey of Cornwall*, 1602). Neuss gives good reasons for at least the possibility that *The Creation* was performed indoors, rather like an extended interlude. Again, the first two *Ordinalia* and by inviting the audience to come tomorrow and see the remainder: *The Creation*, though it has no known sequel, gives the same invitation, while seeming complete in itself.

Yet again, there is the problem of precisely how this play is related to the much earlier *Origo Mundi*. Inevitably, much of the same Scriptural and legendary ground is covered, occasionally with strong verbal resemblances. But the almost 3,000-line *Origo* takes us up to the reign of Solomon, the almost 2,500-line *Creation* only to thanksgivings after the Flood. Moreover, it is obvious that the devisers of the *Ordinalia* and of *The Creation* had very different "plots" in mind. That of the trilogy means to show how the promise to Adam of "the Oil of Mercy" in fact works out for Mankind — specifically, in just what happened to the three next generations buried with Adam. Now, *The Creation* does give a version of this pre-burial; but the basic structure of the play is the tracing of two strands of human

at night in *Descent into Hell*; and in Williams's mystical delight in physical beauty, as of Rosamund's arm in *Shadows of Ecstasy*. These seem often to be the nuclei round which the novels took shape.

Most of these visions relate to Williams's understanding of ethics; and it is almost entirely in ethical terms that Thomas T. Howard understands the novels in his *Novels of Charles Williams*. He makes it clear that he follows the respectable tradition by which, for example, Dickens's novels are seen as exploring "human behaviour in terms of . . . social protest". This approach seems to me to leave out a great deal — though of course not all — of what makes Dickens's novels or Williams's specifically worth reading. Williams's mystical exaltation Professor Howard talks of as largely the means to the moral end; the scepticism which to Dr Cavaliero is central he thinks is probably a defect caused by social insecurity. In fact his book is almost the inverse of Cavaliero's: the latter is all about loving and learned, qualities which are obvious strengths, and less importantly weaknesses — his style is at times the gnomic unwillingness to expand of which he quite rightly accuses Williams, but which arises from having thought too long about one's subject. Professor Howard's is a modest handbook for those who find the novels attractive as he himself does, and, as he also does, puzzlingly complicated and strange and new.

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lineage, one good and one evil, from the making of the world down to its almost-overthrow. This is a more complicated plan than that which takes us up to the Redemption of Mankind (by the Oil of Mercy) and the Resurrection of its Redeemer — though *The Creation*, like its predecessor, does hint at the birth of Christ. Compared to the *Ordinalia*, however, *The Creation* is a rather disappointing book as poetry and as drama — though, indeed, here is nothing in English Medieval Drama worth comparing to the Trilogy.

Minor oddities and modernities in *The Creation* are the appearance of a personified Death, and a personification of English Jewry, extending to whole phrases and even whole speeches, with much bilingual word-play. The *Ordinalia* use English mainly to signal comedy or evil — with the powerful exception of the *Three Maries' Lament* for Christ. Not so *The Creation*. Further, given space enough, why did the devisers of the later play omit so many beauties and subtleties that are found in the *Origo*? And why did a strong Marianism, and many tedious incidents, not provide the play? Neuss provides convincing answers for most of these questions.

She concludes that the later play cannot have descended directly from the earlier, as we know it, despite parallel passages, but that the original compiler of *The Creation* was working (at least partly from memory) upon another version of the *Origo* to which he had played God the Father; that he was a Cornishman whose first language was nevertheless English; that he was probably also "stage-manager" of *The Creation*, and may have been a deliberate agent of Counter-Reformation.

Neuss's work is so valuable that one hesitates to make niggling objections. Nevertheless, once at least she treats *Ordinalia* as a singular, "un-cyclic" (sic). Her note on *Origo* is "nonsense", which in English is usually *illy-vally*, seems unnecessarily wisecracking. The Latin title of the play, *Origo Mundi*, means "the beginning of the world", not "the origin of the world", as she says. And without in the least detracting from the value of the book, I think it is a pity that the editor has not been able to provide a more complete translation of the play, which is so valuable that one hesitates to make niggling objections. Nevertheless, once at least she treats *Ordinalia* as a singular, "un-cyclic" (sic). Her note on *Origo* is "nonsense", which in English is usually *illy-vally*, seems unnecessarily wisecracking. The Latin title of the play, *Origo Mundi*, means "the beginning of the world", not "the origin of the world", as she says. 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Climbing the mountain

Gavin Kennedy

ALEC NOVE

The Economics of Feasible Socialism
244pp. Allen and Unwin. £12.95
(paperback, £5.95).
0 04 335048 8

ALAN H. SMITH

The Planned Economies of Eastern Europe
249pp. Croom Helm. £16.95.
0 7099 2326 0

There is a perennial conflict between the ideals of socialism, as expressed by the good intentions of those who describe themselves as socialists, and the practical consequences of putting those ideals to the test. Many socialists, Marx included (indeed, Marx par excellence), have avoided explicit discussion on how a socialist society would function. Alec Nove's most telling criticism in *The Economics of Feasible Socialism* is that socialists have tended to resolve this conflict by simply assuming away all the real problems that they would face in running a socialist, or for that matter, any other economy.

The debate on the efficacy of socialism has often been a confusion of two quite distinct issues. Whether socialism deserves to succeed where capitalism allegedly has failed is not the same issue as whether socialism would in practice work at all. The majority of socialist theorists since Marx have

concentrated largely on the first issue, in their detailed critiques of capitalism for instance, while neglecting the second – as if it were a sign of naivety, or worse, reactionary intent, to raise questions about how a socialist system would work in reality.

In an ideal world where issues of great importance were debated dispassionately by those in a position to decide on the outcome, we would have addressed such questions long ago, and sifted through the evidence with great care and scientific rigour. Instead, those in favour of socialism ignore experience, and those opposed to socialism ignore its (good) intentions. The result is a dual literature, seldom cross-referenced except for purposes of polemic.

Professor Nove has spent an academic lifetime studying the practice of socialism. His latest book demonstrates a thorough knowledge of the literature from all shades of socialist opinion. Though it raises issues that are well known to specialists, it raises many of them in a new context. He asks anew the question: can socialism work, and if so, what kind of socialism would it be? His own sympathies are declared from the start: Nove wants some kind of socialism to work, if only because he opposes some of the flaws in capitalism as it has developed in the late twentieth century.

He takes as his subject-matter the kind of changes in the way society is ordered which have taken place in Soviet Russia, China, the communist régimes in the Third World, Chile

under Allende, and the reformist socialist parties of the European democracies. It is not made explicit to whom his book is addressed: he is not very confident that fellow socialists, or at least the leftists among them, will read it or worry about its message. On page 166 he wonders whether any "left-wing socialists" will have read that far.

He begins with a convincing demonstration that there is nothing in the legacy of Marx that helps answer questions about how socialism, and its successor system, communism, would work (or indeed how we would recognize either system if we stumbled across them). He then surveys the socialist economies that have existed to date. The survey is not encouraging to those who believe that by altering property relations improvements in human behaviour will follow as a matter of course. Man is perfectible perhaps, but apparently not all men are perfectible simultaneously.

Those Marxists of a quasi-religious bent who are immune to experience have no need to revise their views on the world, either because they can redefine their socialism to exclude the experience of actual socialist economies like the Soviet Union ("state capitalism", "deformed workers' state", "cult of the personality" etc), or they can believe that it will be all right on the morrow by disregarding all the problems that suggest it will be little if at all different where it is not positively worse (Kampuchea for instance).

The central issue Nove keeps coming

back to, and which torments those who contemplate the options, is whether there is a third way between a market and a command economy. The history of economic reform in the Soviet Union, China, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Germany and Yugoslavia is one of trying to square a circle. The information load required to manage, let alone plan, a highly complex economy with its millions of simultaneous and consequential decisions is so huge that no conceivable human organization could be devised that would not lapse into bureaucratic terror and outright incompetence and corruption. The evidence in Nove's book, and in numerous other sources, suggests that some form of Stalinism is inevitable, and, once in *situ*, it is inmovable.

The Soviet reformers desperately want the socialist system to succeed, but to get it working they need to mobilize the disparate efforts and motivations of millions of people who cannot be monitored and controlled without a massive loss of efficiency and initiative. The failure of the centralized state economy leads them back towards using the market as a conduit for enforcing collective goals. The market, with its system of prices acting as a signal for what to produce, where to produce it and at what standard of quality, is of course anathema to socialist theorists. Indeed, they originally intended the price system to be abolished and replaced with something else (unspecified, except where it was a thinly disguised form of the price system).

Nove's proposals for a feasible socialism attempt to compromise between a centrally run state economy and a mixed market economy. He plumps for a "commanding heights" formula, with the benign socialist state coordinating overall economic activity

through non-private forms of property in the larger enterprises while allowing for gradations of private initiative in smaller-scale activities. He seeks planning by command from the top and seeks some form of negotiated agreements between suppliers and receivers. It is a sensible scheme of the kind that climbs mountains with little more than good intentions, no different in that respect from the motivations of the majority of socialists when they are on their Sunday-best behaviour.

Nove is above all realistic in accepting that all social systems have their flaws and that to expect too much is a certain recipe for disappointment. His feasible socialism will deserve a large readership, but, as with his model society, what we get is in no way logically connected with what we deserve.

Alan H. Smith's book is altogether different. Whereas Nove, Emeritus Professor at Glasgow, weighs in the balance his life's work, Smith, the young lecturer at London University, competently works through what must be destined to be the textbook for a course on The Planned Economies of Eastern Europe. And he manages to do this extremely well. His deployment of the necessary statistical infrastructure is balanced neatly with summaries and surveys of the relevant literature. He does not raise the level of difficulty beyond the reach of the non-economist (except for a couple of sections on trade balance and macroeconomic equilibrium).

There is nothing disclosed in Smith's book that challenges the picture drawn by Nove. Indeed, Smith's book is a neat complement to Nove in that it provides a more detailed study of much of what Nove speeds through in pursuit of his conclusions.

Confusing the issue

Victoria Chick

JAMES TOBIN (Editor)

Macroeconomics, Prices and Quantities: Essays in Memory of Arthur M. Okun
305pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £17.50
(paperback, £7.50).
0 631 12898 0

The title of one of the essays in this volume includes the useful new word, "macroconfusion". It might have served as a title for the book as a whole, indicating at once the chaotic state of the art of macroeconomics, the scale of the problem, and the multiplicity of ways in which the authors of this collection have sought to deal with it. The eight papers in this book were originally given at a conference in memory of Arthur Okun, whose own attempt to develop an alternative approach to macroeconomics was published posthumously (*Prices and Quantities*, Blackwell, 1981).

Okun's diagnosis of "macroconfusion" is shared by almost all in the economics profession. It is generally believed that some rigidity of prices and/or wages is an essential ingredient in Keynes's demonstration of the possibility of persistent unemployment. (Pre-Keynesian doctrine held that unemployment was a temporary phenomenon, which would disappear when "prices and wages adjusted to new 'full-employment' levels.") The theory of market behaviour, however, assumes that prices and wages will be flexible unless they are imposed in some way, e.g. by the "monopoly power" of trades unions or imperfect competition in product markets. Thus macroeconomics is seen as having no foundation in microeconomics, and on the whole macroeconomists have accepted this view (Robert Solow is an honourable exception in this volume). The non-specialist reader will be somewhat mystified by the fact that this price flexibility, which entrails macroeconomics, is derived from an analysis of supply and demand that implicitly assumes a complete absence of commitments over time – as if

workers were fired and re-hired every day and customer loyalty did not exist. Okun's main contribution in *Prices and Quantities* was to explore this issue.

Martin Bailey, Robert J. Gordon and John B. Taylor take up the point directly in this volume, the first two submitting the data of past experience to interpretation: Bailey looks at the American experience of the 1930s and Gordon at the US, UK and Japan over more than a century. Both conclude that a great deal in any explanation of wage and price behaviour must rest on institutional changes or differences between countries; the abstract theories we possess are not adequate to explain what Taylor explores the possibility that long-term wage contracts, though beneficial to both parties, may have adverse macroeconomic effects. He concludes that it is not the length of contracts *per se* that may create difficulties but the forecasting on which they are based.

There are two other papers here which a non-specialist might read. William Nordhaus's "Macroeconomics: The Dilemmas of Economic Policy" and Robert Mundell's call for inter-national monetary reform. Nordhaus would have economists retreat to the same syncretic (not synthetic) combination of neoclassical and Keynesian ideas whose contradictions and oversimplifications are responsible for the present macroconfusion. Rather than argue this position he relies on a skilful polemic backed up by very skimpy empirical evidence.

Mundell's essay is entertaining as well as having a serious purpose. What is it that unifies the proposals for a monetary reform of Plato, Aristotle, Keynes and Milton Friedman? Answer, they were all culture-bourgeois, projecting their own economic situations where it was irrelevant and inappropriate. This is a good, though provocative, beginning, but in the claims of a new monetary standard with the features of our standard and whose whom he criticizes, writes as an American; a European or Third World economist would see things differently. He has posed the right question, however, and that is worthwhile.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

MICHAEL OAKESHOTT

On History and Other Essays
198pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £12.
0 631 13114 0

The first three of the five essays in this book are devoted to establishing the character of "history as a mode of understanding..." [the] theoretical postulates... and presuppositions which specify it as an enquiry of a certain sort and distinguish it from other sorts of enquiry". Though these postulates "are not formulae for conducting an historical enquiry or premeditated norms to which it should subscribe", Michael Oakeshott's enterprise is counter-normative: he sets out to deny that the historian's activity, in order to be itself, is subject to any set whatever of "practical" postulates which require to be met in the present in which the historian is located. There does of course exist a present of "practical" concerns, and many of the objects used in pursuing these concerns are objects surviving from a past or pasts; but it is an error to suppose that this present and its demands are "primordial" (a term apparently employed by some misguided francophone); or that the past which the present finds usable is the past as studied by the historian.

The historian is exclusively concerned with the past, and with objects surviving from the past exclusively in their relation to the past: with their survival from the past rather than their survival to, or in, the present. It follows that the past with which the historian is concerned must be a "past which has not survived", since survival is dictated by the "practical" needs of a "present of practical concern", which invents its own past but is not author of the "past of historical concern". The historian seeks to characterize a "past which has not survived", within the limits imposed, but also according to the opportunities furnished, by a congeries of objects most of which have survived because of the practical utility imputed to them by actors in a series of presents, which have become and are becoming pasts in their turn. It would seem to follow, first that the historian's time is spent largely in receiving and negating information concerning the alleged practical utility of pasts and past-composing objects, in converting this information into information concerning "pasts which have not survived"; second, that these pasts which the historian studies will consist largely of the practical activities of historical actors, of the "presents of practical concern" which they have constituted, and incidentally of the usable pasts or pseudo-pasts which they have invented.

But the "past which has not survived" does not consist of a set of conditions now over and done with and to be characterized only in the perfect tense. Perhaps Oakeshott exaggerates the gap between the endeavour to characterize sets of conditions under the way of "the language of civil humanism", and we may all share his irritation when this and other terms are pre-casually employed – and the endeavour to characterize the events which occur under them and modify them. The working historian is accustomed to pursue these "historical" enquiries in conjunction. But Oakeshott is right to insist that "historical" is in the last resort a term of the vocabulary. In the sense that it is concerned with "things happening under a diversity of conditions", all of which they are contingently related, as they are to other things, "happening" or events, "historical" is in the last resort a term of the vocabulary. In the sense that it is concerned with "things happening under a diversity of conditions", all of which they are contingently related, as they are to other things, "happening" or events, "historical" is in the last resort a term of the vocabulary. In the sense that it is concerned with "things happening under a diversity of conditions", all of which they are contingently related, as they are to other things, "happening" or events, "historical" is in the last resort a term of the vocabulary.

In the first place, the historical enquiry may be thought of as growing out of the practical enquiry, superseding but not destroying (in Oakeshott's terms, excluding but not denying the latter; the historian may have set out to clarify the past of some present problem or means of solving it, only to discover that he is doing something different. When the jurist in a story perhaps appropriate, retorted to a demand for immediate practical applicability with the words "quid hoc ad edictum praetoris?", he was announcing that such a discovery had been made. But he (or the author of the story) also knew that to deny the jurist's role as a source of the present one of its resources in the fourth of the essays, "The Rule of Law", as in certain chapters in *On Human Conduct*, he offers an

though there are sentences in this book which take a good deal of time to decode.

The historian will have no difficulty in recognizing and accepting this characterization of his activity. To be a historian is to be concerned with the activities of human beings in the past, and to be neither surprised nor embarrassed when these turn out after adequate characterization to have excluded themselves from the practical activities of the present. The historian studies the activities of others in other times, and even when these were practical activities (as is generally the case) he expects them to have been so far contained within the conditions obtaining in a past, and so far separated from the conditions obtaining in the present by the complexities of historical change, as to be excluded by differentiation from that present's practical concerns. If the present wants to make use of them, it will have to re-characterize them in terms which are not those used by the historian. At this point, the historian may have to recognize – and Oakeshott seems not to consider this – that to inform his neighbour that there is a way of understanding the past which divorces it from the practical concerns of the present is to modify that neighbour's resources for pursuing his practical concerns, and even his understanding of what these concerns are. But the historian will respond to this recognition by declaring that his concern with the historical past is essential, in the sense that it is what makes him a historian, and his concern with the present of practical concern is accidental. To be a historian is to affirm the contingency and accidentality of the present, its concerns and its practice. Somewhere in this direction – though I shall not pursue the enquiry – may lie the roots of Oakeshott's philosophical interest in the nature of the historian's activity.

By adopting such strategies – and running the political risks which they entail – the historian may successfully assert that he is under no obligation to further the practical concerns of his present, and that his activity is not to be understood as an extension of the activity pursuing the question: what is he to think of himself should he find himself addressing these concerns? Oakeshott's answer seems plain: to do so is logically extraneous to the satisfying of those conditions which specify his activity as a historical enquiry, and therefore the presence in a historical work of what has been specified as a practical enquiry must be formally improper, and in addition – Oakeshott strongly suggests – trivial in terms of any contribution it may accidentally make to the pursuit of the historical enquiry proper. I am not quite at ease with the rigour of his response, and I wish to enquire whether the relation between the "practical" and the "historical" enquiries may not be made to appear less exclusive: whether, for example, they may not be seen as in some continuous dialogue with one another. In asking this, I shall be concerned less with the logic of historical enquiry than with its practice (meaning its pursuit, not its practicality in the sense so far considered), and I shall be open to the possibility that dialogue between logically distinct enquiries may in practice be something more than trivial.

In the first place, the historical enquiry may be thought of as growing out of the practical enquiry, superseding but not destroying (in Oakeshott's terms, excluding but not denying the latter; the historian may have set out to clarify the past of some present problem or means of solving it, only to discover that he is doing something different. When the jurist in a story perhaps appropriate, retorted to a demand for immediate practical applicability with the words "quid hoc ad edictum praetoris?", he was announcing that such a discovery had been made. But he (or the author of the story) also knew that to deny the jurist's role as a source of the present one of its resources in the fourth of the essays, "The Rule of Law", as in certain chapters in *On Human Conduct*, he offers an

continued to discuss the practical implications of this act. It is, then, possible to imagine a historian who pursues a properly exclusive enquiry into the past as object of historical study, and at the same time informs his present of the limitations being imposed upon the attempt to regard the past as an item in the pursuit of practical concern. To say that these "pasts" are logically distinct from one another, or to say that such a historian would be struggling to clarify a linguistic muddle, is not to say that the exclusion of information regarding the two pasts would be a logical struggle to disengage the two ways of conceiving a past is not the mere preliminary to the pursuit of a properly historical enquiry; it is a very large and persistent component of that enquiry itself, and if we can think of the historian as perpetually receiving information from (among other sources) his present, which he perpetually struggles to convert into information concerning a historical past, both the sociology and the history of historiography take on a significance not mentioned by Oakeshott. The question is whether Oakeshott supposes, or if he does, is right in supposing, that information regarding the "past of practical concern" is subversively as well as logically discontinuous with information regarding the "past which has not survived", and the standing of the latter concept is in need of further exploration.

To do this we must examine the boundaries of Oakeshott's concept of the "practical" activity which may generate statements about an alleged past or pasts; and these boundaries do not seem to have been specified in much detail. On pages 39–44 may be found an account of a "practical" past as consisting of a storehouse of idols: miscellaneous symbols, totems or fetiches which may be fetched out and displayed for a variety of rhetorical purposes, as when Bismarck said "we will not go to Canossa". But this is the practical past as junkheap or bargain basement; the objects which it contains are related to the present in a manner infinitely less systematic and sophisticated than is found when, for purposes no less practical, the church or the law, the nation or the cosmos, is said by some and denied by others – in a debate which the historian appears in order to criticize – to have come to in a certain way, which furnishes it with a certain character and authority in the present. Oakeshott might, as I have suggested, have said more of such "practical pasts" and the historian's relation to them.

There is a great gulf between the *boutique fantasque* and the allegation considered on pages 20–21, to the effect that a human being's distinguishing characteristic is his capacity for purposive activity and "his sole concern... to seek and enjoy his identity in the exercise of this capacity". Oakeshott considers this in order to refute the claim that the present of purposive activity is "primordial" and that the agent defines history solely in order to affirm his identity as that of a practical agent. It is well to refute this, and it is well refuted; but are we to understand by this refutation that "to seek and enjoy one's identity" is by itself a practical activity, and that to write of the past in order to locate and define a present, and one's identity as a part of that present, is an activity other than that which constitutes historical enquiry? We may join Oakeshott in denying that such an activity possesses "primordial" authority over the historian; but to say that he may not pursue it without beginning to be something other than a historian would be to say that he may be author of his history, but may never recognize himself as an actor in it. He may not write history which ends in locating and defining himself and his world; his past may not have a present.

Once again, let us endorse Oakeshott when he says the history is wrong if he thinks he *must* write history with such an ending, while continuing to ask whether he is also saying that the historian is wrong if he thinks he *can* write history with such an ending. In the fourth of the essays, "The Rule of Law", as in certain chapters in *On Human Conduct*, he offers an

J. G. A. Pocock

account of the growth of the European concept of a state which appears to end in and illustrate a present condition of affairs, and only his severer critics would assert that these chapters are not history. We may reconcile an apparent conflict by supposing that Oakeshott's history (and Oakeshott as historian) writes history which need not end in the present, which indeed needs to satisfy conditions which do not presume that it ever will, but which sometimes, perhaps and as a matter of contingency, does so end. But what now becomes of the contention that the past which the historian studies must be a "past which has not survived"? This contention in the first instance rested on a categorical distinction; the objects composing the practical present were defined by their use in a "present-future of practical engagement", whereas those composing the historian's present were defined as survivals from, and evidence of, a past or pasts. The distinction seems not to make much of the possibility that these are the same objects differently regarded; and there is the further possibility that the "past which has not survived" was the "present-future of practical engagement" to me, or my uncle's day before yesterday, before historical change altered the concerns we felt then into the concerns we feel now.

Once the notion of change is introduced, and its contingent rather than necessary character is insisted on as it is here, it appears to become open-ended, and there is no guarantee that the historian may not find himself describing sequences of change which have a present tense, which are still going on in his own world and defining – or rather, suggesting alternative means of defining – the pursuit of practical objectives by himself and others. There is nothing sacrosanct about my practical objectives if they entail a presentation of history which can be shown to be either mythical or false; to comment on the historical entailments of my alleged practical needs is a practical activity which may modify my pursuit of such needs. There is no necessity that the historian should write history having this kind of outcome, but no necessity that he should have ceased to be a historian if he happens to do so. If history is the study, it may be now and then the pursuit, of action recognized as contingent; but in ninety-nine contingencies out of a hundred, the historian will not find himself in such a role.

Perhaps the conservative's danger is that he may become over-defensive on the score of contingency. In "The Rule of Law" Oakeshott reiterates the distinction between the state of being ruled by laws whose aim is the rule of law and not any particular benefits which the laws guarantee, and the *Polizeistat* organized to pursue practical benefits which may become the test of its success and even its legitimacy. (On page 152 this is called "the Baconian or teleological concept of a state", but it is not clear how prominent an actor Bacon is meant to have been in its genesis; the history we need might focus on the changing use of words like *police* and *Polizei* in the eighteenth century, and the lack of any native equivalent in English.) The last essay, "The Tower of Babel", is a somewhat predictable anti-socialist and anti-utopian fable which seems to belong to the Hayekian 1950s rather than the Thatcherian 1980s; it appears to advance beyond the proposition that the state falsifies itself if it subordinates its practice to the pursuit of a particular end, to the proposition that because the state is sovereign it cannot select a particular end without subordinating all else to it. In this version of the myth, the Babelians commit race suicide; they all crowd into their Tower and it falls on them; but they are led to do so merely by Hobbesian fears operating at a low and vulgar level. Inertia, not enthusiasm, is the cause of their downfall; the choice of a base yet transcendent objective operates to deprive them of the ability to conceive of alternatives. But these Babelians are too lazy and sloppy-minded a lot to have kept their minds on tower-building or heaven-storming for long enough; other objectives would have distracted them, and the true end of the story is not the fall of the Tower but the confusion of tongues. And this is not altogether an unhappy outcome: *felix peccatum Nembrothi*. It is only because so much mediation, translation and interpretation out of one language into another is necessary that human beings find much to say to one another. Confusion is the precondition of communication.

Raymond Aron's *Penser la guerre, Clausewitz* (reviewed by Michael Howard in the TLS of June 25, 1976) has now appeared in an English translation by Christine Booker and Norman Stone under the title *Clausewitz, Philosopher of War* (418pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £15.95. 0 7100 9009 9).

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Laying hands on the pumps

Laurence Whitehead

GEORGE PHILIP

Oil and Politics in Latin America: Nationalist Movements and State Companies
577pp. Cambridge University Press. £37.50.

In 1981 oil accounted for two-fifths of the total value of Latin American exports. Not since colonial times (perhaps at the height of the silver boom) has the continent been so dependent upon the world market for a single commodity. 1981 was, of course, an *annus mirabilis* for countries with a surplus of oil available for export: two years later the drawbacks are far more apparent than the advantages. But even in 1981, when soaring oil prices did most to boost the level of Latin American export revenues, the region's share of world trade was hovering near the lowest levels for more than 150 years. Not since the Napoleonic Wars have Latin American exports contributed such a small proportion to international commerce. Furthermore there is a real risk of further shrinkage if the global trend towards protectionism is not quickly halted, or if the current tentative recovery in world demand and commodity prices is not sustained. Moreover, with Latin America's population still fast increasing and becoming more urbanized, energy consumption within the region seems destined to accelerate rapidly whatever happens to world trade.

Indeed, one way to interpret Latin America's long-declining share of world trade is that the urgency of basic domestic consumption needs, coupled with the addition of the middle classes to US-style consumer extravagance, has left an ever-dwindling fraction of output available for export. In no branch of economic activity is this more evident than in the oil industry. State oil companies have consistently stimulated domestic consumption, and diminished their investible resources, by drastically underpricing their sales on the home market. Moreover, free-market critics often allege that they have mismanaged the patrimony they inherited from their private-enterprise predecessors. They were under no great discipline during most of the 1970s, when world oil prices kept multiplying and foreign credit was cheap and abundant. But now that Latin America must "export or die" these enterprises are coming under great pressure radically to alter their priorities.

The central section of *Oil and Politics in Latin America* deals with the political and institutional background to the rise of the state companies. A generation ago most of the crude oil pumped in Latin America was sent abroad for refining and sale in foreign markets. The enterprises that dominated this activity were multinationals based in the United States and Europe, serving customers and shareholders outside the continent and employing expatriates to manage and operate their Latin American subsidiaries. As George Philip demonstrates, this "classical" pattern of oil extraction is now almost extinct in Latin America. Only Venezuela still seeks to participate in this internationalist game. However, Dr. Philip also demonstrates with great thoroughness the drawbacks of the alternative arrangements now practised almost throughout the continent, namely state enterprises engaging in varying degrees of monopoly, partnership or complicity with the multinationals. The Guatemalan "bifurcated" model, for example, is only a southern extension of the huge reserves operated by PEMEX, the state enterprise that acts as a counterweight to the mixed economy created after the Mexican revolution. But PEMEX is also the most heavily indebted enterprise in the Third World and its last director-general is currently awaiting trial on a \$34 million corruption charge. Nor is this an isolated episode. Top officials of Petroven are engaged in a similar scandal in Venezuela.

Incredible though it might seem, both these two nations, of exporting nations have recently been rearing on

the brink of default on their foreign borrowings. Neither Mexico nor Venezuela would have dreamt of incurring such vast debts, nor would bankers have pressed so much money on them, except against the security of their publicly owned oil reserves. Had this oil remained in private hands expansion would almost certainly have been financed more by equity and less by debt. On the other side of the same account, the Brazilian state enterprise Petrobras (the largest oil-importing firm in Latin America) is now asked to pay cash on delivery for its oil purchases, since Middle Eastern suppliers no longer trust its credit. In short, Latin America's state oil companies - although an object of pride to many nationalists - stand charged as major culprits for the region's present parlous economic predicament.

Dr Philip completed his study before the magnitude of current financial difficulties had become apparent, with the result that some of his concluding chapters reflect an outlook that has slightly dated. Nevertheless the main themes of this thorough and impressive study are likely to stand the test of time. Covering the entire twentieth century, and providing detailed (often freshly researched) interpretations of developments in some dozen countries, his book will prove an indispensable source of reference, though not necessarily one to be read from cover to cover at a single sitting. Perhaps inevitably it contains a certain amount of repetition and over-illustration of the main arguments. But it is hard to fault the central section of the book, which covers the creation of state enterprises and the nationalization of foreign firms, in nine well-constructed and persuasive case-studies.

The pattern that emerges from this survey is more varied and less dominated by ideological passions than one might have expected on the basis of the most well-publicized episodes. The Argentine Ministry of Agriculture discovered oil in 1907, long before the multinationals had begun their searches. Consequently, the Argentine public sector began accumulating resources and expertise that were necessarily competitive with anything that foreign enterprise could offer. Unfortunately, on this front as on many others, the Argentine story is largely of local failure to capitalize effectively on extremely favourable initial endowments. In this case resentment of the oil majors has less to do with their record of exploitation and abuses than with the unfavourable light that their success sheds on Argentine national endeavours.

At the other extreme stands Venezuela, where indeed, from the 1920s to the 1940s, the oil moguls did much to create a black legend about themselves (and again in the 1950s, although Philip is surprisingly charitable about their record in this second period). Yet the 1976 Venezuelan nationalization was the longest delayed, the most smoothly executed, and the least bitter of all the transfers of ownership examined in this book. Venezuelan reformers were able, largely thanks to the Cuban Revolution, to present themselves to US opinion as the lesser evil. Thus they chose to emphasize their differences with the revolutionary Left, while searching only faintly for the white assets discredited in the foreign press. At Lake Maracaibo, in the meantime, these state politicians in Caracas devoted their energies to building up an international organization that would eventually challenge the entire balance of power in the world oil market. It was they who created OPEC.

The Mexican takeover of 1938 is much more frequently studied, and provides the archetype of nationalization as a political confrontation. Philip makes some attempt to modify the more stereotyped accounts of this episode, but as his version makes clear what really distinguishes this case is the exceptional circumstances following the Mexican Revolution and the American reactions thereto. Oddly enough, the Mexican nationalization redeveloped one long-standing source of friction between Mexico and the United States, and together with the convergence of interests brought about by the

Second World War) Mexico's most radical act of defiance in fact created the conditions for a shift towards far more conservative policies and far more harmonious relations with the United States.

In addition to carefully reconstructing these three episodes, Philip also deals with the quite distinctive problems confronting such oil-importing countries as Chile, Uruguay and Brazil; and he sheds new light on the wave of takeovers that took place in Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador in the early 1970s. These studies are of a uniformly high standard. There is, however, some room for debate about the conclusions that the author seeks to extract. What he tries to do is bring out the element of rational calculation underlying all government oil policies, even those that are presented in the most emotional and provocative manner. Undoubtedly this approach yields some important discoveries (Philip is particularly enlightening about the effects of international conditions) and he is careful not to employ it too dogmatically. Nevertheless his account sacrifices an aspect of the process that may in fact be fundamental. He tends to underestimate the distinctive psychology of economic nationalism, the overriding importance for all these countries of affirming national identities that are only insecurely established. In the absence of this factor, the explanatory devices he favours - urban class alliances, "institutional weakness", and so forth - seem incapable of doing the work required of them. To fill out his explanations would require a more systematic exposition of certain themes that only emerge tangentially from the case-studies: the shaky, but not entirely negligible status of Latin American legal systems; the structural

changes taking place within the State bureaucracies which contribute to their erratic but growing assertiveness.

Dr Philip also examines at some length the trials and tribulations of six of these state enterprises after the climactic moment of ownership transfer had passed. In this section the greater the tribulations the more successful seems to be the author's exposition. In general, however, the concluding third of the book is less gripping than the middle, in part because so much of the story has yet to unfold (or is currently unfolding), in part because the intricacies of oil-market strategy and of enterprise administration are inherently tedious, except to those directly concerned. Perhaps also Philip loses sight of some of the broader issues. Has Latin America's oil nationalism helped to overcome underdevelopment? Has it promoted accumulation or consumerism? Has it contributed to "national building"? Or has it simply consolidated a new form of monopoly that is inherently authoritarian and parasitic in nature? Above all, how much responsibility for Latin America's present acute economic predicament must be laid at the door of these state enterprises and, responsible or not, are they capable of adapting to the very drastic changes in economic strategy that will now be required?

Dr Philip is an avowed practitioner of the comparative method, which is no doubt the key to clarifying these issues. Yet the range of alternatives covered by his book is not the full spectrum, and this limits the conclusions that should be drawn. The Cuban nationalization is excluded, presumably for two good reasons that it is different in kind, and that anyway, good information is lacking. However Cuba

The con-man's contract

H. S. Ferns

GUIDO DI TELLA

Argentina Under Perón, 1973-76: The Nation's Experience with a Labour-based Government
246pp. Macmillan, in association with St. Antony's College, Oxford. £25.
0 333 28085 7

Although printed in Hong Kong, this book is expensive: more than 10 pence a page. Somehow the high price is appropriate, for Guido di Tella describes a regime which, in its first eighteen months, churned out two and a half times as much money as had been printed in the previous 100 years of Argentine history and in its last fifteen months of power experienced an inflation of 566.3 per cent per annum, rising to 788.8 per cent per annum in the last three months of Peronism. Mark II. It is fitting to pay for enlightenment on this subject: not so much as the unhappy people of Argentina, but something.

Dr di Tella was for a time the Secretary of State for Economic Co-ordination and Planning in the Peronist government. What could have prompted a civilized man with a PhD in economics from MIT, and the son of a successful pioneering family, to take office under a man like Perón? Dr di Tella tells us. On the eve of his entry into the service of Perón, he wrote in the *New York Times* (May 25, 1973): "The party may after the death of Perón, splinter into a thousand pieces, but one of them - organized labour - has the potential to draw together 80 per cent of the movement. If it can attract professionals and intellectuals, it can hope to become a British-type Labour party." Then he wryly adds a final sentence to his book: "This, however, is the realm of wishful thinking that prompted the author to collaborate with such an 'animal'."

Dr di Tella acknowledges with some surprise that, even in Argentina, cannot be explained in terms of economic interests contending with one another. "Economic motives and interest must come into the picture", he writes, "but cannot exclude others, as human nature is more complex than that... At times it may be difficult to understand why socially progressive groups did not support a labour-based government". So far so good. Di Tella seems to be making some progress towards an ordinary common-sense understanding of politics, but then we come upon a sentence like this: "It at the same time one asks how it was that when several hundred people were killed in the 1955 uprising [which ended the first Perón regime], the fact went practically unrecorded; while Peronism, with its half dozen killed, was subjected by the press to accusations of brutality, one may begin to understand the resentment of unfair and discriminatory treatment felt among partisans of the popular movement up to this day."

Given the political history of Peronism, must one condemn as preposterous Di Tella's notion that Peronism and the British Labour Party have some common features and policies which might justify the hope that they would come to resemble each other? Not at all. It must be remembered that Perón gave to the political alliance, which won for him the Presidency in an honest and open election in 1946, the name "Labour Party". This was abandoned in favour of "Peronism", something less conscious, but Perón always adhered to the idea of a political movement where socialist rhetoric embraced the social democratic acceptance of private as well as public enterprises employing wage labour whose rewards for work are determined by collective bargaining. Perón came from the same intellectual stable as Sir Harold Wilson, and Messrs Callaghan, Healey and Hattersley. Many of the policy prescriptions he endorsed might have been written by Mr Shore.

When he returned to power with 50 per cent majority in September 1973, Perón at once adopted a policy bearing much resemblance to the social contract of Callaghan and Healey. The GNP was to be split: 50 per cent for the wage workers and 50 per cent for investment and the cost of government. This produced an advance in real wages, rather more generous than the social contract produced for Britain. But the social contract, it is true, was a temporary expedient, and coming earlier than the social contract, it was more opportunistic. In 1973-74, the terms of the social contract were set by the President of the USA (not the money for investment and the cost of government, and this explains the spread-up in the printing of money and the heavy borrowing by the government.

The internal political problems of the Peronist movement must have been the British Labour Party, and the fact that Perón had to deal with the Argentine tendency, just as Callaghan and Foot were confronted with the Militant Tendency. The Argentine Peronist movement, which was a force between Peronism and Labour Party, which Dr di Tella once entertained as a benign

point to a larger consideration. The whole balance of Philip's interpretation might look quite different if he had compared the Russian alternative. Between 1938 and 1938, without assistance from the Western oil companies and operating in conditions of great hardship and underdevelopment, the Soviet state oil enterprise trebled its output. This resulted in a supply of Russian crude oil available for export that was hard to place on a world market tightly controlled by the Seven Sisters. The Russians consequently made a series of efforts - which Philip reviews - to secure outlets in hard-pressed Latin American republics such as Chile and Uruguay. In the post-war period the Russian industry continued to flourish under autarchic state ownership, as much so that during the 1970s Russia finally overtook the US to become the world's largest oil producer. (This Soviet achievement was almost certainly an essential prerequisite for the survival of the Cuban revolution.) A balanced discussion of the appeal to Latin Americans of public ownership in the energy sector needs to take into account this palpable demonstration by the Soviet Union that rejection of the multinationals could (at a price) lead both to national autonomy and to economic success. A conclusive assessment of the limitations and shortcomings of the Latin American state enterprises would need to measure their performance not only against the model provided by private enterprise, but also against the Soviet model. The present crisis raises the question whether the Latin American hybrid - or half-way house - is a stable and coherent alternative between these two poles. Dr Philip has not closed the book on all these issues, but he has made a valuable contribution towards their resolution.

Higher echelons, lower depths

J. K. L. Walker

DAVID THOMSON

Dandiprat's Days
253pp. Dent. £8.50.
0 460 04613 6
In Camden Town
£8.95.
0 09 153750 9

The simultaneous appearance of two new books by David Thomson, the one a novel, the other the writer's view of the district in which he has lived for the past twenty-eight years, both cast in diary form and with the same physical background, inevitably suggests a game of similarity-spotting. Can the two books be seen as aspects of a single design? Cautionously, one must bring in a "non-proven" verdict.

Dandiprat's Days is a madman's comedy, presented in the form of a manic-depressive's journal; its triptych of Descent, Surface and Ascent mark out the stages of Daniel Pratt's journey towards the final crisis. Cast somewhat perfunctorily in the role of a senior civil servant, Daniel appears to embody reason and respectability, setting out bowler-hatted each morning for Whitehall in his vintage Bentley (subverted together with his large house in Camden Town, from his rich antique-dealer father). Evenings bring the glum but tidy pleasures of elderly Aunt Jane's housekeeping or a solitary dinner table at Wheeler's or the Savoy. By now in his mid-forties, Daniel is still a virgin, a condition which seems set to shroud when he falls in love with Virginia, a local barmaid. Hemmed in by the past and present shades of his family - by his dead father whose dust-shed antique furniture still half-fills the house and whose collection of half-crowns in the attic threatens to spill out of the rotting canvas bags in which they are stored (Dan - nicknamed Dandi as a child after the least valued coin in the collection - trickles handfuls of them down Virginia's back); by his sister Cicely - Siren-sister (similarly wooed a childhood with rice) and her husband, the Oaf, anal-retentive

collector of vintage cars - Dan looks for relief from the piled-up weight of guilt and repression to his medical advisers, the jaunty named trio of Dr Psex, Dr Pshes and Dr Phyz. They guide him into and out of the Home from Home, a stately loony-bin in Hertfordshire.

As he enters the final manic phase, Daniel's actions become wilder, culminating in an extravaganza of property-buying for Aunt Jane, Cicely and her lovers, and Virginia and her child. The line between fantasy and actuality becomes increasingly blurred, distinctions between real, if eccentric happenings, and imagined scenes harder to make out. All this lifts the novel above a Footsie romp. Thomson's insights into manic-depression go deep, and he skillfully jump-cuts between his narrator's cultivated awareness of his condition (as displayed, for example, in the conversations with the elderly Oxford psychiatrist) and the farcical ironies of his situation.

One of the novel's many levels, touching deceptions may be seen as underlying gentlemanly inhibitions. Something of the same spirit informs David Thomson's journal of his life in London, *In Camden Town*. The diary covers the period from August 1980 to April 1982, but also incorporates snippets of social history that illuminate the district's past.

Camden Town, some two miles from the West End, remains essentially a working-class district, an example of that inner-city decay which so occupied the minds of planners in the 1960s. Ingenious traffic "management" has completed the dislocation begun by the canal and railways, and a prominent Underground station and fine public lavatories offer further evidence of municipal intervention (Thomson notes, with amazed irritation, that the Ladies, at the time of writing, had been closed for five years for renovation). Two minutes walk to the west, however, where Camden Town abuts on Regent's Park, gentrification sets in, continuing towards Primrose Hill in streets and squares that became at one time a byword for radical chic. Here, in Regent's Park Terrace, Thomson, in 1955, bought the house in which he has

lived ever since, getting in early on an act of which he still does not feel part.

Certainly, *In Camden Town* pays little or no attention to the incomes. Thomson writes of the poor, the destitute, the disreputable, among whom he moves on easy terms, not with the bright professional concern of the social worker, but with the never-flagging curiosity and forbearance of the drinking-companion in the Windsor Castle, the Edinburgh Castle or the Engineer. He knows too about life in Arlington House, the last Rowton House left in London, he tells us (although I think anyone who has lived for a while in Bondway, Vauxhall Cross might take him up on that). Montague Curry, the Victorian philanthropist who set up Rowton Houses as an alternative to the common lodging-houses of the time (he adopted as his title the name of his aunt's seat in Shropshire when he was ennobled in 1880), took a detailed interest in their planning, insisting that coat-hooks in the wash-houses should be above the basins rather than on the wall behind so that men could be sure that their pockets were not being rifled. By interspersing the diary entries with extended background information such as this, Thomson greatly adds to the interest and value of the book; there are, for example, notable descriptions of the sweated labour suffered by orphans and other children from the parish in Midlands mills and further afield in Bermuda; of Bernard Shaw's activities as a St Pancras Vestryman; and of the great invasion of Irish navies who heaved out the canal and the railway cuttings on the approach to Euston. The canal, too, plays a more sombre part in Thomson's personal narrative, with hints of a suicide attempt.

In Camden Town is characterized by precise observation of place and people and a tone of gentle, almost dreamy humanism that avoids sentimentality by a just adequate margin. The book's concern with the poor necessarily makes for an idiosyncratic portrait, but it is one marked by the author's warmth and personal involvement. It is a distinguished addition to the literature of London.

Educating Lucy

John Melmoth

BARRY HINES

Unfinished Business
208pp. Michael Joseph. £7.95.
0 7181 2301 8

Unfinished Business is freighted with endings and ambiguous new beginnings. It opens by remarking, in a resolutely unromantic manner, the demolition of a neighbourhood, and closes with the dismantling of a marriage. Destruction, both historical and marital, serves as prelude to problematic emancipation. For its inhabitants, the reduction of Morley Street to a pile of sooty bricks prefaces the pursuit of those *arriviste* trappings which so unerringly index upward mobility: dormer bungalows, split-level ovens, cork floor tiles and coffee tables sporting vintage car motifs. However, it is Lucy Downs's decision to leave her husband and children which provides the novel with its title, and which is essential to the assumption of an intellectual development interrupted by leaving school at sixteen, getting engaged at nineteen and assuming the responsibilities of motherhood at twenty-one.

Approaching thirty, with two school-age children and a dull husband, suffocated by her housewifely functions, she applies to the local university to take a degree in English; an action which is simply incomprehensible to parents and friends, is profoundly alarming to her husband Phil who attempts to distract her with promises of "a little car" and even "a little job". "What did he think she was, a midget?" His insecurity effectively compels her to choose between Jane Austen and monogamous orgasms. The conflicting demands of student life and established patterns of domesticity prove more stressful than she had anticipated. Transforming her life in an extreme effort of will, she learns to put herself first, to elude restraint; takes a room of her own, funds for herself.

Educating Lucy requires of Barry Hines something of a change of direction. His habitual dour contemplation of thwarted working-class lives is eased aside by the smooth dissections of the campus novel. Lucy's assimilation in a community that trades in words rather than objects of production is a testimony to human adaptability. The contrasts are irresistible.

On her first day, dressed in a skirt and velvet jacket, she is despairingly conscious of looking more like a secretary than an undergraduate. Not only is she cast headlong into a discomfiting swirl of new ideas, women's groups, Anglo-Saxon primers, metaphysical poets and the political theories of Hobbes, Rousseau and Marx, but she is also required to negotiate a change in taste from frozen chips and tinned beans to real coffee and organic honey, to learn that Oxfam jumpers and battered Minis confer a more desirable status than smart suits and new Morris Marinas.

Her difficulties are simultaneously eased and compounded by her rapid seduction at the hands of the reptilian Dr Dave Pybus, faculty minotaur, literature man out of the same stable as Howard Kirk, who knows a nice little hotel in Stratford and who can order a meal in faultless Italian.

Unfinished Business is different in kind from its immediate predecessors. Equally topical, it lacks the urgency of *The Price of Coal*. The urban decay and cuts in public spending that were liturgically insisted on in *Looks and Smiles* are remote from the sophisticated interactions of the tutorial office on the eighth floor of the Albert Schweitzer Tower. The raising of Lucy's consciousness is achieved with some subtlety, but in his depiction of a number of minor characters, Hines verges on caricature. The English Department is inhabited by professors who speak and think continually in inverted commas, or be-tweened specialists in Wynt. There is a certain inevitability about the fact that Dr Pybus's father made his pile in the Lornho asset-stripping operation and thus, quite literally, shows the unacceptable face of capitalism.

Drugwardly mobile

Neville Shack

ANNE M. FAULCONER

The Season
196pp. Blond and Briggs. £7.95.
0 8634 132 0

The racist parties have a pattern of their own: starting in a mood of general disdain, pumped on in a tide of aggression, and ending up with at least one funeral. Of course, these events produce casualties, usually effete socialists whose stamina isn't up to the challenge. The long-running party in this novel certainly doesn't disappoint spectators set up by the prologue, "The Order for the Burial of the Dead".

It is Lord Ned Bridgwater, young scion and main man, who finally succeeds in kicking the bucket. Oddly, the beginning and middle of *The Season* have a more funeral quality than the end. Its characters go down like flies, and the novel is more than plain world-weary. From one "one" who is very much implicated in the death of the President of the USA (not the money for investment and the cost of government, and this explains the spread-up in the printing of money and the heavy borrowing by the government.

The internal political problems of the Peronist movement must have been the British Labour Party, and the fact that Perón had to deal with the Argentine tendency, just as Callaghan and Foot were confronted with the Militant Tendency. The Argentine Peronist movement, which was a force between Peronism and Labour Party, which Dr di Tella once entertained as a benign

chances of riding out the cold turkey storm? Not too good, particularly with his old friend Dr Death in attendance. As Nicola perceptively recognizes, Dr Ash is too much a man for all seasons; he has the methadone, good man, but he also has the smack.

We might as well leave the drugs to get into circulation, and concentrate instead on the social life. The scene is Cragley House, Ned's family seat, so fantastic that it makes a broad fantasy seem an over-ambition in England. Highlighting social manners, Harvey tries the Duchess "as only the son of a scrap-iron merchant turned millionaire could adore a duchess".

Conveniently, when the action in the "Old World" wears thin, Lord Ned and his retinue take off for a whole load of trouble. Not least because responsibility for the narrative here changes hands, their American host and mentor, Dan, the son of the all-important You-Know-Who, gives them a fairly bad press. For this is the New World, a hard-nosed place where junkies and pushers can never be friends. Worst of all, Dan has the hot for Nicola: a lust which might be the mainspring of the tragedy that follows.

So the book, an account of translucent misadventure seen through the prism of high life, climbs druggedly uphill towards its funeral. That takes place in an italicized epilogue which manages to be both sentimental and cynical at the same time. The vicar introduces a note of realism, speaking of the sordid background - "dirty needles" and "bombed-out car parks of the Lower East Side". But it has to be too late. Lord Ned is being buried, and the novel (itself still) hasn't come alive.

Into the time-warp

David Montrose

ANTONY LAMTON

Snow and Other Stories
134pp. Quartet. £6.95.
0 7043 2407 5

Antony Lambton, whose fictional debut this is, has opined that modern literature "has got into a rut": a neat, if unintentional, pun on its supposed preoccupation with sex. Not his style at all. Nor is sprinkling his stories with obscenities, as Harold Acton gratefully notes in his preface. Reading some of these stories is like stepping into a time-warp. The plot of "Service" - a Victorian *grande dame* persuading her plain daughter to marry for status rather than love - could be from Trollope, as could "Charlotte Gwynne", the tale of a timid beauty all at sea in polite society. There is something of "Saki" about "The Intercession", in which a dominated wife is liberated from her punitious husband by supernatural means, while "The Lunette", set in Italy of the 1890s, has a Jamesian flavour. It features Harold Brosson, an American art-dealer, who, through expertise and a little sharp practice, works towards realizing a dream: a villa overlooking Richmond Park. The snow worsens, along with relations between East and West. Lambton attempts to create an atmosphere of imminent destruction - from weather or war - but the tension is not more than a character stating that she is frightened. The diarist is convincing only when she records her annoyance at having to share her food with other residents of the building. The abiding impression is: of her empty-headedness. "1 August 1918" crams into thirty-two pages a novel's worth of plot, recounting the life-stories of two enlightened Siberian landowners, father and son, whose peasants are the best-treated in Russia. It ends with the son and his wife being executed after the Revolution. Inevitably the result resembles an outline more than a story, a long anecdote with a conspicuous beneficiary, the peasants repair to the tavern he built for them "to celebrate the end of the bad old days and the birth of a new system based on brotherly love, equality, justice and fair shares for all men".

his correct and lucid prose lacks verve. A pity: although "Service" and "Charlotte Gwynne" are pretty near irredeemable inconsequentiality, "The Intercession" and "The Lunette" show definite possibilities. This is also true of "Snow" and "1 August 1918", the two longest and most ambitious stories.

In "Snow", a new Russian weapon causes abnormal snowfalls throughout Britain that will be stopped only if Cruise missiles are not deployed here. This has the makings of an interesting, if improbable, political thriller. Lambton, though, tells the story through the diary of an unnamed woman - his central characters are usually women - who sees out the crisis huddled up with her children in a luxury flat overlooking Richmond Park. The snow worsens, along with relations between East and West. Lambton attempts to create an atmosphere of imminent destruction - from weather or war - but the tension is not more than a character stating that she is frightened. The diarist is convincing only when she records her annoyance at having to share her food with other residents of the building. The abiding impression is: of her empty-headedness. "1 August 1918" crams into thirty-two pages a novel's worth of plot, recounting the life-stories of two enlightened Siberian landowners, father and son, whose peasants are the best-treated in Russia. It ends with the son and his wife being executed after the Revolution. Inevitably the result resembles an outline more than a story, a long anecdote with a conspicuous beneficiary, the peasants repair to the tavern he built for them "to celebrate the end of the bad old days and the birth of a new system based on brotherly love, equality, justice and fair shares for all men".

The most successful story in the collection is "La Gioconda", in which the self-deceptions of a once-beautiful woman who will not admit the passage of time, and her husband's soft-hearted complicity in those self-deceptions, are treated with a surer touch than Lord Lambton displays elsewhere. Here at least is a hint that he can do more than simply turn ideas into respectable, uninspiring prose.

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Martin Robertson - Oxford

commentary

The Met centennial

Rupert Christiansen

There are two ways for the cultural historian to approach the phenomenon of New York's Metropolitan Opera, which celebrates its centenary on October 22 with an eight-hour gala. One is to regard it coolly as America's largest and most complex institution of the performing arts, attracting \$22 million from private funds and \$2 million from the government in annual subsidy, as well as a seasonal audience of 800,000 (quite apart from the estimated 140 million who listen to the weekly Saturday afternoon broadcasts), but which is constantly beset by administrative problems and dilemmas of policy. The other is to treat it as the showcase for the greatest singers of the time - from Melba and de Reszke to Sutherland and Pavarotti - for whom every other operatic value has at some time been sacrificed.

Martin Mayer's book *The Met: One Hundred Years of Grand Opera* (Thames and Hudson, £20, 0 500 01317 9) cleverly combines both perspectives. It is spectacularly well illustrated and designed; it excitedly charts the overnight sensations, triumphs, and collapses; and it gossips sharply about backstage feuds and romances. But it also uncovers and analyses a mass of new material from the Met Archives which fleshes out the management tactics, corporate structure, and broader sociology which condition the basic musical product.

Mayer never loses sight of the social and institutional fact. Built in 1890 by the Metropolitan Opera Association, a group of wealthy shareholders led by J. P. Morgan, with the Astors and Vanderbilts in support, the Met remained a private stockholding company until it was given public trust status in 1940. The entrepreneurial skills of the impresario to whom the house was leased counted for much: in the later 1930s, chiefly due to Edward Johnson's exploitation of the drawing power of Kirsten Flagstad and a Depression-induced drop in singers' fees, the Met milked a large profit. In the post-war Bing regime, labour disputes and restrictive practices hampered productivity; now, after a number of ineffectual tribunals and consultants, the conductor James Levine has emerged with probably more power than any individual has previously had in the building.

Inevitably, the Centennial celebrations concentrate more on commemorating artistic achievement than on elucidating the intricacies of organization. New York has seven Met exhibitions at the moment; Met flags flutter down Fifth Avenue; a Met postage stamp is being issued; the press coverage has been exhaustive. Tiffany's even seduces its customers with a display of operatic table settings - solid silver goblets for *Tristan and Isolde*, majolica for the wedding in *L'Elisir d'Amour*, lacquered tea services for *Madama Butterfly*.

Fifty years on: subject women

The TLS of October 19, 1933 carried the following review of *Women in Subjection* by J. H. O'Malley:

The paradox of this book on subject women, published in 1933 and dealing with the position of Englishwomen up to a hundred years ago, is that the nation herself is in a sense still living in an age of subject-women and writing of the hardships of the movement for women's freedom in days when women were more conscious of their lack of liberty than they are now. Women have some amount of legal individuality to-day and some amount of political personality; so that, on the whole, they are rising on their own as a sort of spiritual children, while just a few - the Mary Wollstonecrafts and Elizabeth Fryes of today - are still conscious that they are only yet in the birth-pang stage: possibly the Miss O'Malleys of 2033 will have something more definite to announce than her sister of 1933.

Taking contemporary diaries and records, Miss O'Malley traces the former subjection of women of all classes in this country. Havelock Ellis's definition of a woman as a "cross between an angel and an idiot" seems to have been her position both public and private. Miss O'Malley's book brings out the illuminating fact that it is the mother-idea in the minds of women that has at the same time inspired them to revolt against tyranny and spiritual impotence, and enslaved them more deeply in a spiritual sense. "The moving force, therefore," has been that which Jean de La Fontaine called "l'hygiène féminine", and which a greater, that they have. The authorities that women have should be a pang stage: possibly the Miss O'Malleys of 2033 will have something more definite to announce than her sister of 1933.

The keeper in the cage

Pat Raine

The Old Men at the Zoo
BBC2 TV

Angus Wilson's novel is rather oddly constructed. It is crammed full of side-issues, each of which is briefly brought to the fore. The effect of this raising and abandoning of themes is to generate a sense of undue protraction and recurrent anti-climax. The book opens with the death of a junior keeper in the Giraffe House at London Zoo. The implications of the accident are considered for a time, before another matter takes precedence in the narrative: the conflict between traditional and progressive opinion in the zoo. First one of these triumphs, then the other. A plan to transfer the animals to a National Reserve is set in motion. We watch the initiation and failure of this scheme. Under a new Director, the London Zoo is all set to move back into the past, with Victorian notions reactivated around it, when it is hit by a bomb. The bomb is crucial to the mood of the book: the atmosphere in which all the foregoing events take place is coloured by the approach of war.

The novel is allegorical in various ways. The animals, shunted back and forth between Regent's Park and Snowdonia, represent the patient British people. A rogue or two among them keeps the parallel with British society intact. The old men, the animal curators, illustrate the principle of government by a gerontocracy. The zoo itself, especially in its Victorian incarnation, stands for all the other English institutions, and the eccentricities fostered within them. Then we have the major theme of destruction, political repression and war.

Ringling in the new

Peter Kemp

Bookshelf
Radio 4

"Hello? Eric Morecambe? It's Hunter Davies here. I'm ringing from the BBC. I'm the new presenter of *Bookshelf*." With this unexpected introduction, the latest season of Radio 4's book programme got underway. And telephoning television personalities, it soon became apparent, is only one of the ways in which it aims to ring the changes. *Bookshelf*, under the guidance of Hunter Davies, looks likely to occupy a place some notches lower than it used to do.

Newly evident, for instance, is a heavy-handed effort to attain the common touch with Davies bluffly disavowing nobility. Not, he hastened to stress, that he is quite as ordinary as the audience he is hoping to address. As someone who has "knocked out two million words of journalism" and "had twenty-seven books published", not to mention "three new ones out this autumn", he likes to think he knows a bit about what it's like to be a writer.

resistance - all dealt with in the final well-stocked section.

The *Old Men at the Zoo* is also a drama of personal relations: at the domestic level, clashes and reconciliations between Simon Carter and his American wife Martha contribute interest of a routine sort. Carter is the Secretary of the London Zoo and the hero of the book. His age is important: at thirty-five, he is free from the follies and obsessions that afflict his colleagues. As an administrator he is scrupulous and efficient. Lord Godmanchester, the zoo's President, a newspaper proprietor and would-be cabinet minister, contrives to enlist the aid of Carter in converting the zoo to an instrument of propaganda. While he is out of office, it suits his purpose to procure a state of panic in the country: the animals are evacuated. Once the situation changes: a sense of security prevails, or should prevail, and the animals are brought home. The machinations of Lord Godmanchester are among the numerous elements at the centre of the plot.

In the television version, the predominant themes and schemes are extracted and presented in turn. The episodic structure of the undertaking makes for a gain in clarity as well as simplification. The time of the action is moved forward to 1990 (the novel was written in 1961 and set in the early 70s), with corresponding adjustments: the political aggressors are the Arabs, not the European federation, and the bomb which kills, unlike Angus Wilson's, is an atomic one. Stuart Wilson is a splendid Carter, more authoritative and showy than the figure in the book; and Robert Morley makes a mercurial, automatic Godmanchester. Maurice Denham, Robert Urquhart, Andrew Cruickshank, John Phillips, Richard Wordsworth and Marius Goring are all

have you just finished reading?", Eric Morecambe disclosed that he had read *The Pickwick Papers* and the *William* books some decades ago and intends to read them again sometime. Dialling Jean Shrimpton - or, as he put it, travelling "back in time and space to the Sixties" - Davies elicited from her the news that she'd liked Molly Keane's *Good Behaviour* because "it's my sort of book, I suppose". John Peel, when brought to the phone, turned out to be enjoying "Oh goodness me, what is it called?" A large book by Anthony Burgess. "Devoting her attention to *Check Your Own I.Q.* by a writer she knows, as H. J. Eysnack, Pamela Stevenson explained that "The object of it is to prove that, you know, one is a genius" and "I'm coming out very well".

What wasn't coming out so well, it was obvious by now, was Davies's telephonic brain-wave: the dial-a-comment scheme never connected usefully or entertainingly with literature. And it was a relief when the programme switched back to allowing a writer his say. After the phone-outs and the ploneliness, it was an instructive pleasure to hear Dick Francis talking shrewdly and unaffectedly about his racing thrillers. Steering adroitly round obstacles Davies dropped in his way ("Where is Shergar now?") and undistracted by a background of loudly popular commentary ("You don't need O-levels to write books. Anyone can 'join in' etc."), he showed professionally and winningly, a clear sense of the course he knows his fiction is best advised to follow.

Francis convinced you that his distinctive sub-genre of literature is very much alive and kicking. A later item indicated a lively post-mortem development from the realm of the romantic novel. Threatening to overshadow the Booker Prize, it seems, Betty Trask, a writer of sentimental fiction, has bequeathed £400,000 - inherited wealth, not romantic royalties - for the funding of

excellent as the headstrong of curators.

Angus Wilson devised a variety of striking ends for his characters to follow the keeper kicked in the gash by an ailing giraffe, you have the Director's daughter savaged by an excited Alsatian, previously a pet; the lunatic dragged off the back of a bronze lion and taken away to an asylum; the bird curator, in the act of defending his penguins, trampled to death by a mob; the Prosecutor blow up in a backwater. Only the first two of these exits get into Troy Kennedy Martin's television adaptation, which has its own way of eliminating the others: they are all wiped out in the nuclear attack. The gain here is in dramatic effect, but there's a corresponding loss in irony.

With Jonathan Powell as producer, and Stuart Burge as director, you expect the dramatization to be vigorous and buoyant, as it is; and you are unprepared for the narrative deterioration which overtakes it in the final episode. Somewhere between parts four and five, its effective sprightliness and genuine sense of urgency are lost. It now departs almost completely from the spirit and content of the novel, with only a hint or two taken from Angus Wilson's final chapters. A lot of the action now takes place in a concentration camp, where poor Simon Carter has ended up (this circumstance is mentioned in the book, but not described); here Strawn (Barry Stanton), an old zoo keeper, reappears as a keeper of human dissidents confined in cages. It is hard to think of a more heavy-handed piece of symbolism. Carter becomes the victim of events so frightful that they turn into out-and-out farce; this is a cry from the ferocious humour of the earlier parts. Instead of the telling of a subtle conclusion we might have looked for, the production ends on a note of overstatement.

an annual first prize of £12,000, and five others of £1,000, "for a romantic novel or novel of a traditional rather than experimental nature". This has caused contention. One party, boisterously represented by Peter Rhymer, want the award restricted to romantic fiction; the other, eager to keep the Trask away from them, and agglily argued for by Penelope Levett, emphasize the final sub-clause. Next summer's awards should show which side has won. Meanwhile, the battle over Betty's bequest sounds as without as anything she penned.

The Arts Council of Great Britain has now released a list of its grants and guarantees for 1983-4. Details are given in the Council's monthly Bulletin.

Political Parties of Europe
Edited by Vincent Macaluso
1983 Aldwych Press
Political Parties of Europe: a critical study of the development of political parties in Europe. Contains critical studies of the party's founding, the party's programme, and the party's role in the government. The book is a comprehensive, critical study of the party's role in the government. The book is a comprehensive, critical study of the party's role in the government.

The Use of Force in International Politics
Second Edition
Edited by Robert J. A. Jones
1983 University of London Press
This collection of essays, edited by Robert J. A. Jones, is a critical study of the use of force in international politics. It contains critical studies of the use of force in international politics. It contains critical studies of the use of force in international politics.

commentary

On assuming the trappings of power

Emrys Jones

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
Measure for Measure
Royal Shakespeare Theatre,
Stratford-upon-Avon

The opening moments when one first sees the stage are probably the best. A cavernous interior recedes into the gloom, filling the entire stage space; one can dimly make out dark wall hangings, with forms so embossed that they might be works of sculpture. The period evoked is vaguely baroque; the colours black, white and gold, with an occasional splash of red. Two long strips of carpet, white, stand out on the dark floor, forming a cross. But the whole spectacle is centred on an object opaque, to which the white carpet emphatically leads the eye. This is a single piece of furniture: a pier-glass, eight-foot high, elaborately gilt, its gleaming surfaces picked out by bright light. This mirror, suggestive of private dressing-rooms where men or women can study their own appearance, is the starting-point for Adrian Noble's production.

Downstage, accompanied by servants, a man makes his way to a second doorway, a heavy robe which is hanging from a specially-designed hanger. He takes up a formal posture, his arms stretched out, while his servants carefully invest him in his robe of office. As they do so, his physical stature becomes or appears to become larger and more imposing (the action recalls the robing of the Pope in *Brecht's Galileo*). The anonymous man is becoming the Duke of Vienna. While the ritual is proceeding, a treble voice, sexless, disembodied, traces an invisible melisma. The whole ensemble, light and darkness, robe, mirror, stage, creates a hypnotic image of theatricality. For a few moments it exerts power; it fascinates

On mocking the sublime

Wlodek Mellers

JEAN RAMEAU
Plafée
Sally's Wells Theatre

Rameau's early reputation was as a musical theorist, who prepared the ground for a new age. He became an operatic composer at the age of fifty, like his predecessor Lully, he believed music had public functions of great importance. That he didn't adhere to the traditional tragic theme of a Lullian convention, and that his music tend to be unsatisfactory, stems from his transitional status: what gives his later theatre pieces a

hybrid form somewhere between opera, ballet and musical comedy.

Although Rameau didn't live to experience the real Revolution, of which he would have disapproved intellectually if not imaginatively, there's a point in the fact that during his final decade he eschewed the heroic and veered to the pastoral dream, and even to overt satire. In this context *Plafée* - produced as part of Rameau's tricentenary celebrations by the ever-enterprising English Bach Festival - fascinates. Rameau termed its new genre, which accepts the conventions of the heroic Age but deliberately deflates them, "ballet buffon"; and gave precise instructions to Autreau, his librettist, as to how aristocratic clichés could be refurbished in the spirit of the commedia dell'arte and of demotic street theatre. The satire, directed equally against the gods of the King and nobility, minor supernatural beings (the courtiers), and against mere humans (the being that social hierarchies have become muddled. Jupiter the King is behaving with less than divine dignity. To be revenged on her he decides to have an affair with a low marsh-nymph who has also flouted etiquette by loving a (mortal) king and carrying on as though she were a heroine of high tragedy. The marsh-nymph Plafée is a Lord of Misrule figure, the leader of the antimasque; as ineptly vain as she is grotesquely ugly, she spurns the king who has responded tepidly to her advances, as Jupiter pretends to woo her. In a series of ironic reversals we are encouraged to relish the disfigurement of the muddy marsh-nymph, jolily "married" to the God of Gods.

That Rameau could thus mock the sublime shows that the heroic was outmoded. In his grand opera he had shown that even kings and queens have a Plafée element within them, fully suggested that being fully human

and thrills. But it also makes one suspect that the director would have been happier with a sub-operatic "show" like *Amadeus* (where frankly the words don't much matter) than with his present assignment. When the Duke starts speaking - "Of government the prospect is to unfold... - he induces a sense of anti-climax. Coming after the mime and the music, the expository speeches - mere spoken words - sound frigid and boring. Thereafter the play Shakespeare wrote seems constantly to be intruding into this production as if it didn't belong there, never quite fitting and sometimes getting in the way, at times failing altogether to provide the action which Bob Crowley's settings on the face of it require. In the prison sequence, the centre of the stage is occupied by a grim instrument of torture: a heavy chair, with appliances for securing the prisoner's head and arms. The chair is never used - the action doesn't call for it - but it compels attention in a way that Shakespeare's dialogue, at least in this rendering, quite often fails to do. When the Duke and Isabella visit Mariana at the moated grange, she sits together on cushions under two enormous golden parasols. Yet the Duke is in a friar's habit, and Isabella is a nunnerly novice. The plot at this point is admittedly implausible, but as a way of calling attention to the implausibility (if that's the idea) the incongruity is overstated; it's also distracting. As so often now in Bob Shakespeare productions, the designs are much more vivid than the actors. It's as if the sets and the lighting, the music, even the costumes, existed in their own imaginative right, taking some kind of priority over the actors and their words. Shakespeare is becoming Shafferized, drama demoted in favour of "theatre".

It could be said that the self-effacing pailor of his actors - their faintest, relatively speaking - actually serves, in this social and mundane stress, while bringing out something genuinely present in the play, neglects other

means recognizing its existence and learning to deal with it. But in the *ballet buffon* that bears her name he says in effect: there she is, as large as life, perhaps a bit larger; our civilized lives, however, depend on laughing her to scorn, banishing her from the *file champêtre*. Much of the music of *Plafée* is satirical in the modern sense, as well as being the creation of gothic sensuality of classical antiquity - as is indicated in the prologue which describes the birth of comedy. The chaconne delicately guys heroic pomposity: the busy repeated notes, ungainly leaps and marshy bird and animal noises of the overture momentarily discredit the expressive line and rich harmony of which Rameau was master, relying on rhythm and sensational instrumental devices in the new, middle-class manner. (The Festival orchestra, under Jean-Claude Malgoire, plays them; with just the right fringe of elegance and acidity.) The travesty role of Plafée (brilliantly sung and acted by the high French tenor Jean-Claude Oriol) contains direct parody of baroque coloratura, but also achieves subtler effects by playing off the grandeur of her words against her farcical appearance. She is presented in physical terms, vividly delineated, with all her warts, yet she is allowed her moments of pathos in, for instance, her fearful bemusement at Jupiter's teasing false appearances as owl and donkey. Her vainglorious heart is bruised.

Plafée is stronger as well as funnier than the pastoral dream; and one of the things that makes the opera so entertaining is that her "out of juxtaposition" with King Chiron (in which the word "out" becomes the barking of frogs or her marshes), and her final humiliation by Juno, are even funnier. The deprecation is too comical for bitterness; and this gives a Plafée element within them, fully suggested that being fully human

qualities much more essential. First among these is its intellectual and spiritual dimension. The Duke, Angelo and Isabella are all creatures of highly developed mind and spirit; they speak in a language dense and difficult and are intimately conversant with religious concepts and religious ways of feeling. They have dignity and weight and real human stature.

At least, they ought to have. The chief casualty here is Angelo; which is unfortunate, for although his stage role is relatively short, the play depends on him for its adumbration of tragic depth. As presented by David Schofield, he is physically and in every other way slight, a spruce neat little man with dapper darting movements. With his sleeked-down hair, his starched white cravat and his black tight-waisted surcoat, he looks every inch the social hypocrite who whenever he passes the mirror takes a sly glance at himself. Schofield would make a good Joseph Surface in *The School for Scandal*. But though he projects a well-realized character, it's not by a long way the Angelo of *Measure for Measure*. Schofield has no use for a good many of Angelo's lines, and he throws away the soliloquies. He's clear and decisive, but prosaic and unsuited, with no spiritual awareness, no anguish, and no profundity. I have never before seen this role so trivialized.

The damage this performance does to Shakespeare's play is considerable, and the rest of a rather lightweight company cannot altogether save it. Juliet Stevenson's Isabella lacks steel and extremity and too easily dissolves into girlishness, but in the last scene she rises to some fine wordless acting. Daniel Massey makes a reliable Duke, but both are hampered by their Angelo, or rather by Angelo's absence. This production will not persuade many that *Measure for Measure* in performance can be one of Shakespeare's most impressive plays.

Not all the singing and acting in Tom Hawkes's ingeniously simple production come within striking distance of the superbly ludicrous Plafée's, though Peter Jeffes's Mercure and Henry Herford's Jupiter run him close. Ours greatest debt, after we've paid homage to Rameau, is perhaps to Belinda Quiry, whose authentic re-creation of the dances makes the past present, holding the balance between graceful gravity, witty elegance and sheer fun; and to the designer Terence Emery, who has worked from original designs used at court and in the Italian Comedy.

The four most recent English National Opera and Royal Opera guides (John Carr, £3 each), are Number 21 *The Valkyrie*, with essays by Geoffrey Skelton and Andrew Porter; 22 *Cost for Love* (0 7145 3882 5); 23 *The Force of Destiny* with essays by Peter Conrad and Bruce Brown; translated by Andrew Porter (0 7145 4007 2) and 24 *Peter Grimes and Gloriana* (0 7145 3856 6). Each volume contains critical essays on the background to the work, a "thematic guide" to the music, the complete libretto in its original language plus English performing version, a discography and a bibliography.

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Oxford University Press

How mad, if at all, was Ezra Pound? And how much, if at all, of the question? The more often debated the question of his opinions versus his poetic and literary gift has obscured these base issues, to some extent, down the years. Now, a forthcoming book based on clinical records has reopened the whole matter. By means of the Freedom of Information Act, Dr E. Fuller Torrey of St Elizabeth's Hospital, Washington DC, has been able to obtain many of Pound's medical records. There is going to be quite a squabble over *The Roots of Treason: Ezra Pound and the Secret of St Elizabeth's* (McGraw-Hill).

The book is replete with allegations, many of them made in a suggestive rather than a documented way. One is given the impression, at the least, that Pound's distinguished literary friends more or less "fixed" for him to be awarded the Bollingen Prize in 1949 as a means of embarrassing the US government. It is implied that Dr Winifred Overholser, who had charge of him, was far too solicitous, on too little evidence, of Pound's mental state. (For, as long as he was "mad", he could not be arraigned for treason.) There is the clear implication that women—Sheri Marinelli and Marcela Spann—were allowed into St Elizabeth's in order to console Pound sexually. In depicting his eventual release it is said sarcastically that "the insane asylum had served nicely as refuge and showcase; it had all been, in the words of a friend, 'a tale told by an Eliot, full of Pound and fury, signifying nothing'." Dr Fuller Torrey seems here to have been tempted, by the felicity of the quotation, into a conclusion at odds with the book. It's never suggested elsewhere that the whole argument is nugatory.

Contentions present themselves straightaway. James L. Laughlin, a friend of Pound's since the old days in Rapallo, the agent for his estate, and still his publisher at *New Directions*, is incensed by what he described to me as the "unethical" use, by a physician, of hospital records. Furthermore, he states that Pound was mentally quite incapable of standing trial and that it was only the unrelenting care of Dr Overholser, who died fifteen years ago, that enabled him to function in the institution at all. The Bollingen Prize, bestowed for the Pisan Cantos, was not in his judgement "rigged" at all and the people concerned with the award (Auden, Eliot, Lowell, Allen Tate,

American notes

Christopher Hitchens

Conrad Aiken) were "not the type" to have done so. He dismisses the story about the women out of hand—"one had to be let in by a warden with a key and supervised during the visit. Dr Overholser would never have allowed it."

There seem to be three debates going on at once. First, was Pound guilty of treason? If not, or even if so, was he mad? Third, was he given privileged treatment for either condition? The first question is the easiest. By making his broadcasts where and when he did, Pound was legally guilty of treason, though similar statements about Roosevelt and the Jewish conspiracy were made by numerous people in America with constitutional impunity. As to his sanity, it seems that Pound, while no physical danger to others or to himself, was unfit to plead and would, if indicted, have broken down as he did at Pisa. (The two questions may be directly connected, since antisemitism of the Pound type is thought by many psychiatrists to be a symptom of advanced paranoia.) Alfred Kazin's generous diagnosis of "a mind in trouble" and James Laughlin's friendly attribution of the term "batty" both serve equally well here. The fact that Pound, under Dr Overholser's tuition and supervision, so far recovered as to execute two Confucian translations and a version of Sophocles, does not mean that he was faking. Dr Fuller Torrey at least insinuates that much of his eccentricity was feigned, but all Pound's visitors, including committed haters of his opinions, attest that he was often quite barney.

As for the question of special or privileged treatment, it can be argued that Pound was handled more harshly than other fascist collaborators, and also less so. He never stood trial, and was never really incarcerated. He was not isolated at St Elizabeth's, as Dr Fuller Torrey describes the hospital rather wince-makingly as "a sanatorium for savants"—but he was in confinement long after other rabid broadcasters had been released. He had also to live with continual

uncertainty about his status and his future.

One makes these points with a conscious effort at fairness, because all of the new and old evidence suggests that Pound acted as a continuous solvent on the sympathy of his friends. He never for a moment abandoned his Jew-baiting and even began, while in hospital, a fresh relationship with a white supremacist brute named John Kasper, well described by Ernest Hemingway in a letter to Archibald MacLeish as a "dangerous fawning jerk". The letters from William Carlos Williams show an almost superhuman patience, often expressed in an impatient style, to "Dear Ez". "No one forgives you for what you did, everyone forgives you for what you are," and for God's sake you didn't expect anyone to listen to your foul-mouthed broadcasts did you? Pound's friends found him a trial even when they were attempting to save him from one.

The literary evidence for insanity is, of necessity, very debatable. Some might find arguments in the later cantos for what James Laughlin calls the "acute panic" of which the asylum partially cured him. The state of psychiatric opinion on matters like schizophrenia and narcissism was, in that period, inchoate. The letters that Pound wrote were often confused and elliptical, almost indecipherable as well as nasty, but he achieved lucidity and productivity too.

It's very rare that one can use the Catch-22 metaphor with any precision, but it obviously took a lot of devoted work to get Pound declared insane in order that he might be released from an asylum. Indeed, T. S. Eliot complained at one stage that Ezra did "not want to accept freedom on any terms that are possible." The ambiguity of the eventual diagnosis still survives. It is complicated, in the present context, by the notoriety of Soviet horror clinics for "deluded" dissidents. And it still raises the uneasy question, which is not suggested by many other cases, of how genius and fascism can coexist in one person. In that respect, anyway, Pound's

uniqueness comes as a relief. The verdict of "guilty but insane" will be the retrospective one which vindicates Pound's friends and condemns his opinions.

Publisher's Weekly, the almanack of the American book trade, has decided that it can no longer give an annual report within the compass of its usual yearly summary. The industry has grown so vast and complicated that it merits a proper yearbook (which is now available published by R. R. Bowker at \$39.95 and \$29.95). It is an excellent combination of summary and analysis and, seen as a long-term projection, rather a sobering read. In 1982, trade sales were noticeably down and the paperback industry in particular was hit by recession, high interest rates and the consequent disappearance or absorption of four mass market publishers.

In his rather guardedly pessimistic "overview", PW's editor John Baker does not confine himself to market indicators only. He describes "the very general impression, of publishers and agents alike, that it was becoming more and more difficult to find strong, publishable manuscripts." Some attributed it to the poor literary education now apparently prevalent, others to a hostile economy that leaves little time or energy for anything not directly connected with making a living; but whatever the cause, most editors were professing themselves alarmed at the paucity of good work, rather than at the amount they were having to turn away.

The frontiers of free expression, set wider in the United States than in any other country, were felt to be undergoing slight but worrisome contractions in the period under review. The present administration is decidedly less friendly to the Freedom of Information Act, and has interpreted it in ways that restrict access by independent authors and researchers. The use of libel suits against novelists, by persons fancying themselves portrayed in fiction, seems somehow un-American but is on the increase. By contrast, most local

redneck efforts to purge public libraries have been successfully challenged in the courts. Even so, the President made such triumphs slightly exiguous by sponsoring a budget which would eliminate all Federal support for libraries in the first place. Such are the outlines of pressure by which the book world is, according to PW, constrained.

So far, the promised bonanza from electronic publishing has not materialized to redeem the situation. But, as Robert Dahlin reports in his review of this field, there has been a "first" to record. The Source, a data base company in Virginia owned by the *Keweenaw*, claimed to have published the first electronic novel, *Blind Phantoms*, was written by Burke Campbell, on an Apple II personal computer, in just under 72 hours. It was "published" for Source subscribers later in the day of its completion. It could be read on the screen, or printed out for as little as \$2.03. It was said to have great narrative drive. Why does this not delight me?

The city of New York has declared October 17 the start of W. H. Auden week. There is to be a reading of Auden's work, by poets as varied as Joseph Brodsky and Derek Walcott, at the Guggenheim Museum. Edward Mendelson (who else?) will chair a symposium entitled "Auden's Legacy" at New York University. The panel includes both Stephen Spender and Christopher Isherwood. The latter's world is well-represented during the week, since we are to see the Hopkin-designed production of Stravinsky's *Rake's Progress*, for which Auden and Chester Kallman wrote the libretto and there will be a premiere of drawings of Auden by Don Bachardy.

I am amazed that nobody has tried before, but an effort is to be made to erect a plaque to Auden on his old home in St Mark's Place. It seems that the landlord is unkeen. If an Auden week cannot generate a "fringe" there, what can? There should be a public reading, in St Mark's Place, of the much-pirated Auden doggerel *Days in a Lay*, which describes in lyric detail the place, where the confiscation is confirmed. We believe that confiscated materials are destroyed, and that vandalism damages our culture and heritage. Original manuscripts sometimes years of patient labour cannot be replaced. An example of cultural vandalism is a collection of poems by a well-known author, *Unholy Self*, *Unholy Self*, by Peter Selgert, which, as well as his autobiography, in spite of the fact that his books were recently officially published.

The most painful example is the case of the writer Dr Savrda who, as mentioned in March 1983 at the Council Regional Court for "incitement to the overthrow of the existing order" on the basis of the fact that he copied a poem by Alexander Pushkin, published in Czechoslovakia as well as the USSR, which he reprinted in his library. The court, expert in literature, Dr Kala from the Olomouc University, ruled that the poem "is strongly reminiscent of the poem 'The Soldier' by Soviet poet, which was never published in the USSR". The wife of Dr Savrda, during the interval in the court hearing, rubbed the local literary circles, where she borrowed the poem was evaluated as a "poem of Soviet life". Although the poem was presented to the court, Dr Savrda was still sentenced to five months imprisonment. It could quote a number of similar cases of political persecution.

What unites these disparate essays is an elegant compromise between academic presentation and quality journalism, as well as the intimacy of appointments of their own. The Security of tenure may, indeed, be a secret of *Parasite Review's* long life. The academic resource brought to bear on any recent issue of the magazine is astounding, and should you believe in the continued existence of the independent writer and reader, it is some importance, terrifying only in imported East European style which makes statements not been before down in complacency and comfort.

Books in Czechoslovakia

Sir, — We are turning to your periodical concerned with literature and cultural values and asking you to help us to bring to your attention the consistent and continuous destruction of literary and scientific books in Czechoslovakia comparable to the destruction of Czech books during the Nazi occupation.

During house searches concerning alleged "incitement" or "activity against the republic", literary works, poetry, translations, philosophy and books on social and physical sciences are being confiscated. Some of these books published in Czechoslovakia or abroad, samizdat editions or manuscripts and their copies. There is no list of prohibited books. Police are ignorant about literary activity arbitrarily confiscate whatever they fancy.

There are hundreds of literary, scientific and theological authors, as well as journalists, unable to publish for political reasons. Many have been excluded effectively to silence since 1968 with a brief respite at the end of the 1960s. Many have lost the right to publish since 1969. Forbidden authors are only one avenue of contact with their public, by using samizdat background, typewritten editions, eg. *Kvart*, *Kvart*, *Expedice*, etc. Thousands of books have been published in this way, an effort requiring considerable sacrifice and personal courage, as such an activity has become the subject of criminal persecution.

Where criminal proceedings are taken against the owners of books, confiscated literature is evidence of the anti-state policy. Even if the accused are released, confiscated materials are never returned. If the accused insist on a special hearing of the court, a special place, where the confiscation is confirmed. We believe that confiscated materials are destroyed, and that vandalism damages our culture and heritage. Original manuscripts sometimes years of patient labour cannot be replaced. An example of cultural vandalism is a collection of poems by a well-known author, *Unholy Self*, *Unholy Self*, by Peter Selgert, which, as well as his autobiography, in spite of the fact that his books were recently officially published.

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'Rienzi'

Sir, — In a predictable snarl at *Rienzi* (Commentary, October 14) Michael Tanner has got it wrong. Winifred Wagner did not give the *Rienzi* score to Hitler. It was presented to him by a group of industrialists in 1939 on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday. He was also given the scores of *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*, as well as other autographs now lost. There is no evidence that Hitler valued the *Rienzi* score more than the others. But his reported statements about the work, and the use of bits of it for Nazi rallies and newspapers, make his possession of the autograph just a little unanny.

Tanner thinks that *Rienzi's* long-suffering benevolence has nothing to do with modern totalitarianism. Surely benevolence, or the appearance of it, is one of the subtlest tricks of any totalitarian regime. Hitler's long-suffering letters to Roehm betrayed nothing of the brutal SA purge that followed. Nor did the Hitler of the Berlin Olympic Games exactly convey the impression of a warmongering ogre. In the opera *Rienzi's* enemies are pardoned once. What Tanner doesn't say is that they are slaughtered in the third act, and with the argument that "clemency has made them more punishable. If we destroy them now, we'll be justified in the eyes of the world."

The appalling weaknesses of *Rienzi* make the appallingly arrogant genius who wrote it for this listener more sympathetic. But there is enough of the opera in print now for Tanner to know that some of its "private" moments (unfortunately omitted in the otherwise depressingly convincing ENO production) are as good as anything in Verdi's *Macbeth*. For Tanner's remark that it is "devastating comment on the bankruptcy of mid-nineteenth-century grand opera" can be only one devastating (and benevolent) punishment: one hundred rehearsals of *Rienzi* — all of it.

JOHN DEATHRIDGE,
King's College, Cambridge.

Darlan's Death

Sir, — Sir Douglas Dodds-Parker reproves me in your issue of October 14 for saying that the man who shot Admiral Darlan was acting on SOE's orders. Sir Douglas tells us in his *Setting Europe Ablaze* that this man was an officer of SOE's, explains at some length how he came to be carrying an SOE pistol, and adds that his superior was "taken to safety" after the assassination. If he does not want us to believe that the admiral was shot by SOE, he invites us to believe that SOE's discipline was unbelievably slack.

Namier said once that a great many profound secrets are already in print. If you know where to look for them. The fact that this assassination was SOE's has been in print since 1947, tucked away in the posthumous diaries of a junior officer in the Irish Guards who earned a DSO with SOE in France before being killed in action with his regiment in Normandy. He wrote that in the course of his SOE training he "had already been acquainted with the assassin of Darlan and knew of the existence of similar briefings" (*Hugh Dorrer's Diaries*, Cape, 1947, page 135). Presumably the assassin he met was the one "taken to safety", as the other had promptly been silenced by a firing squad.

M. R. D. POOT,
88 Heath View, London N2.

'The Borders of Vision'

Sir, — May I as a postscript to Norman Friedman's generous praise of *The Borders of Vision* (October 7) come briefly to the aid of my fellow victim of David Brown's "Septem-ber 97" There is I suppose no reason why reviewers should always work in the field, however, as his diadems. It must have grieved Robert Ogden to learn that in standing on

to the editor

A Herbert Sonnet

Sir, — May I suggest that if we entertain Sir Edmund Chambers's preferred identification of the boy of Shakespeare's Sonnets with William, Lord Herbert, then we have in one of Herbert's own poems what looks like an account of the boy's first meeting with the woman of the Sonnets? The text of the poem, in his *Poems* (1660), is:

Yet was her Beauty as the Blushing Rose,
And greedy passionate was my desire,
And Time and Place, my reconciled Foes,
Did with my wish, and her consent conspire:
Why then o're-reachless of my Loves
So eagerly pursu'd with rough intent,
So dearly purchas'd with perform'd condition
Kept I my rude Virginity unspent?
Did she not sweetly kiss? and sweetly sing?
And sweetly play? and all to move my pleasure?
And every dalliance use, and everything,
And show my sullen Eyes her naked Treasure?

All this she did, I wittfully forbore;
And why? Because methought she was an whore.

The sonnet form suggests an early date and this is confirmed by the reference to Herbert's virginity which he had lost by 1599. In view of the temperament shown by his life-long womanizing, his visit to London about his proposed marriage in 1595 (his sixteenth year) would not be too early for this adventure.

There are a number of correspondences to the situation in the Sonnets. The red rose suggests a brunette rather than a blonde. The woman plays (Sonnet 128) and sings (Sonnet 141) and is very much the wooer (Sonnet 41). The word "whore" does not mean that she was a prostitute (something that Herbert would not merely have thought, but known). What is implied is that she was an immoral woman, as when Doctor Johnson, said of the divorced Lady Diana Spencer, "the woman's a whore and there's an end on't." Herbert's refusal was not moral but prudential and the twist in the poem that the very promiscuity that made her accessible also made her dangerous.

The character of the young Herbert shows interestingly. He had enough poetic ability and eye for a situation to make him young as he was, a not unworthy first reader of the Sonnets. At the same time he showed a self-confidence and a touch of brutality in keeping with the boy who made Shakespeare pass "a hell of time". The identification must of course remain speculative but it fits well here. At worst the poem shows how a lively young aristocrat thought and behaved in such a situation; at something more, it gives some further light on the two shadowy figures in the triangle.

H. W. PIPER,
School of English and Linguistics,
Macquarie University, North Ryde,
New South Wales, Australia.

'The Beggar's Opera'

Sir, — In his review of *Commando* by Desires, *Reich* (September 16) Geoffrey Wheatcroft harshly criticizes the British for shooting Boers down in British uniforms. But he does not present the issue fairly. Reitz himself recounts an incident (page 250 of my 1968 Faber edition) when two British soldiers were killed by Boers dressed in British uniforms, at least partly because the British hesitated to fire on men wearing the uniforms of their colleagues. As Reitz put it, "the wearing of British uniforms had without doubt been the proximate cause of the death of these two men". What were the British authorities to make of this? The whole issue of the wearing of civilian clothing or enemy uniforms by guerrillas is discussed in Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars* (1980, Pelican, pp. 182-4) which specifically refers to this incident. Walzer appears to think that the killing of the British soldiers justifies Kitchener's order that Boers captured in khaki should be shot. Kitchener certainly used the justification, according to Reitz.

M. J. HORSMAN,
9 Nithdale Road, London SE18.

performing on the high tightrope he feels sure that some real person is intended; he might even wonder whether the cushion that broke his fall had some equivalent in reality. Then he turns to a commentary and finds that indeed Flinnap is meant for Sir Robert Walpole and the cushion for the Duchess of Kendal. But where in *The Beggar's Opera* is there a passage that arouses similar suspicions?

There is one place where it always seemed to me, and Sir John Plumb has confirmed, that some allusion might lurk. In Act 1, Scene 3, Peachum is reading aloud from a list of his gang. With emphasis and relish he rolls round his tongue "Robin of Bagshot, alias Gorgon, alias Bluff Bob, alias Carbuncle, alias Bob Booty". Sir John Plumb explains that this string of abusive nicknames would have been at once applied to Walpole. No doubt there were roars of laughter in the theatre; but I still feel no further forward. If Bob Booty is Walpole, as he certainly is and, as most commentators tell me, the whole force of the satire is directed against Walpole, then no doubt Bob Booty, thus early introduced, is going to be the hero, or anti-hero, of the whole opera? Well, no; a mere name in a catalogue, he never appears on stage and is never even alluded to again; reasonably enough, because Peachum's last word on the subject is that he has decided that Bob Booty shall be hanged at the next session. The trail goes cold before it has even become hot.

Some years ago I put the same question to my friend Romney Sedgwick, a great authority on eighteenth-century politics. He instantly quoted: "That Jimmy Twitchever, should peach me, I own surpriz'd me" (Act 3, Scene 14). These were the words in which Lord Sandwich in 1763 was reproached for having turned against his one-time intimate friend John Wilkes, and the nickname Jimmy Twitchever stuck to Sandwich from then on. But this is the opposite of what I am looking for. Sandwich was only ten years old when *The Beggar's Opera* was produced and the nickname does not appear until Gay had been dead for twenty-one years.

I hope that someone may be able to answer my question, at least in part. Until they do, while I still remain open to conviction by supporters of the traditional line, I shall continue to wonder whether some people who have written on the subject may have got their ideas the wrong way round. Is it the case that *The Beggar's Opera* is crammed with political allusions, or is it rather that, after it had won its enormous popularity, political partisans began to say that Walpole and Townsend were no better than Peachum and Lockit?

DAVID HUNT,
The Athenaeum, Pall Mall, London SW1.

'Commando'

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M. J. HORSMAN,
9 Nithdale Road, London SE18.

Author, Author

Competition No 145

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office no later than Friday, November 11. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers to be opened, or failing that, the most nearly correct — in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries should be addressed to The Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Printing House Square, Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8EG, and marked "Author, Author 145" on the envelope. The solution and result will appear in our issue of November 18.

1 Nicholas was not to be of the party; he was in disgrace. Only that morning he had refused to eat his wholesome bread-and-milk on the seemingly frivolous grounds that there was a frog in it. And when he had eaten it, he had found that there was a frog in it. And when he had eaten it, he had found that there was a frog in it. And when he had eaten it, he had found that there was a frog in it.

2 There's the boy was the best of sent at first, though you can't understand why he's so shy, speaking as they do where he came from. Nasty unfriendly ways he had but he didn't so much that you could call him not till he'd seen me kill the goose.

3 B — at that time was a young plumpness of some nine summers, in appearance a miniature edition of his father and in soul and temperament a combination of Dead End Kid and army mule: a freckled, hard-boiled character with a sardonic eye and a mouth which, when not occupied in

Competition No 141

Winner: Kevin J.P. Maynard

Answers:
1 He was so jolly of his jowles, and sumwhat chilledgerd.
His lif liked him light, he loved the lasse.

Author to long live or to longe sitte,
So blisid him his yonge blod and his brygn wyldie.
Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, lines 85-9.

2 Ipse ego Dardania Rutupina per aquora puppes
Dicam, & Pandrasidos regnum vetus Inogeniae,
Brennumque Arvirgumque duces, praeiungens Bellinum,
Et tandem Amyrconem Britanniamque, hanc, deinde, Arturo ferali, trahebat, Medusae velut, assumptae, Gorgone arma.

Merlin's death.
Milton, "Epitaphium Democriti", lines 162-68.

3 Arthur, Elaine, Mordred; they are all gone.
Among the matted galleries of bones.
By the long barrows of Logres they are made one.
And over their city stands the pinnacled corn.

Geoffrey Hill, "Merlin".

The Overseers' Foundation has announced details of the Frederick A. Thorpe Travelling Fellowship for 1984. Further details are available from the Overseers' Foundation, 100 Broadgate Road, London EC2M 2YU.

The periodicals, 5: Partisan Review

Douglas Dunn

WILLIAM PHILLIPS (Editor)
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Boston University is the present home of *Partisan Review* and where its editor for almost fifty years, William Phillips, now in his mid-seventies, is professor of English. The current issue opens with a symposium on "Writers in Exile" held in Boston in May of last year, chaired by Daniel Bell and introduced by Phillips. Among those who took part were Vassily Aksyonov, Viktor Nekrasov, Eugen Loeb, Jan Kott, Pavel Litvinov and Efrim Elkind; that is, four Russians, a Slovakian and a Pole.

To listen to the voices of these exiled writers is to fill out an incomplete British knowledge of *Partisan Review's* conspicuously left-wing beginnings. It brings on a numb sensation of disbelief, not only, or not chiefly, in *Partisan Review* or its editors, or the political fervour or sheer presence of mind which must surely have contributed to the magazine's survival and longevity, but in the century, its "deceptions" and "disfigurements." No doubt it is thought naïve to be frightened by what one reads; such, at any rate, is the prevailing mood of British and American criticism. It is perhaps that deflation of urgency which these dissenting East European writers and intellectuals deplore in their colleagues in the West. Some of them say so; but their suspicions can be felt throughout the symposium in the uncertainty of style in an otherwise authoritative series of testimonies. Vassily Aksyonov's voice here is particularly vividly remembered and

mischievous. His irony is remarkably candid and the eloquence with which he spells out his crippling "gratitude" to the Soviet Union is among the most disturbing documents on this stifling subject which I have read. "I would like to express my profound gratitude to my former rulers, as well as to Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev, for helping me to become a writer. I have never desired any other destiny."

Partisan Review's line on its early association with the Communist Party and the John Reed Clubs of America (of which it was once an official magazine) appears to be that it understood Marxism as a "method of analysis" and contested all along the official Communist notion of art as an instrument of political propaganda. It is clear, however, that the magazine was, or certainly came to be, anti-Stalinist, a process of mental washing that has continued apace to the extent that one wonders more cynically than is perhaps necessary at why no Latin or South American or South African exiles and witnesses were invited to take part and the conference limited to East European dissidence. Looking back on *Partisan Review's* editorials of the 1930s, one notices that they seem written on principles very similar to those exposed by Efrim Elkind in his symposium speech, which he calls "Some Thoughts on the Literary Life and Living Literature." (Fibs being such a feature of our current British literary scene where, in poetry at least, we go under the name of "polemics", we might be braced by a little home-brewed analysis on this subject.) Soviet dissidence, Elkend demonstrates, throw in a smattering of official sentences or an official salute ("The Image of the Communist in Soviet Literature") to improve respectability in a writers' world, that sort of resonance is known to count. That, though, is what one sees in *Partisan Review's* early

editorials where the right sentiment of Marxism and Left opposition politics read as pretexts for printing what staff wanted while flattery to grimmer supporters with their version of seriousness.

That an American magazine of this kind of pedigree should have outlived the "agony of the American Left" is in itself little short of miraculous. Since the furnishing of its earliest affiliations, *Partisan Review* can be seen to have behaved itself with an exemplary high regard for the USSR, which he reprinted in his library. The court, expert in literature, Dr Kala from the Olomouc University, ruled that the poem "is strongly reminiscent of the poem 'The Soldier' by Soviet poet, which was never published in the USSR". The wife of Dr Savrda, during the interval in the court hearing, rubbed the local literary circles, where she borrowed the poem was evaluated as a "poem of Soviet life". Although the poem was presented to the court, Dr Savrda was still sentenced to five months imprisonment. It could quote a number of similar cases of political persecution.

What unites these disparate essays is an elegant compromise between academic presentation and quality journalism, as well as the intimacy of appointments of their own. The Security of tenure may, indeed, be a secret of *Parasite Review's* long life. The academic resource brought to bear on any recent issue of the magazine is astounding, and should you believe in the continued existence of the independent writer and reader, it is some importance, terrifying only in imported East European style which makes statements not been before down in complacency and comfort.

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For those directly engaged in uncovering it, the history of science is a fascinating discipline. It has such depth and richness of texture. Read the laboratory notebooks and personal letters of poor old Joe Blogois, that forgotten world of provincial mid-Victorian Brischester struggling vainly to elucidate the chemical structure of Barbados sugar — far before the time was ripe, of course, so they don't get anywhere, and never got published — and you will hear the authentic tones of curiosity, obsession, faith, despair, and even temporary

This is why Dr Roman's opinion, that twentieth-century science is too recent to be seen from a historical standpoint is unacceptable. It not only excludes a very large fraction of 'man's achievement in science', which has been so extraordinarily accelerated in this era; it also reflects and transmits a limited view of the nature of science itself. This is a large book, competently researched, clearly written, handsomely produced and attractively priced, but it leaves room enough for other histories that will show contemporary science as a complex endeavour still deeply rooted in the distant past and yet closely adapted to the cultural and social realities of our own days.

مكتبة الامم المتحدة

